



CIRCLE *of* PROTECTION

May 18, 2023

Dear President Biden and Members of Congress:

We write to you as the Circle of Protection, a coalition of national church bodies and related ministries representing the diversity of Christianity in this country. The organizations in the Circle together have 100 million members. Our churches are on the front lines of assistance to people in need across the country and around the world. All of us agree that our government has a moral responsibility both to steward taxpayer resources and to provide help and foster opportunity for people in poverty.

These convictions are rooted not in political ideology but in religious faith. They are expressed in the Lord's Prayer, the prayer that Jesus taught. When we pray for our daily bread, we are reminded that millions of Americans and hundreds of millions of people around the world often have to go without the food they need. When we pray for God's kingdom to come, our vision of God's kingdom includes "hunger no more" (Isaiah 49:10 and Revelation 7:16) and Bible-grounded awareness of the need for just laws as well as charity (Psalm 146:6-9 and Isaiah 10:1-2). We pray that God's will be done on earth, not only in heaven.

Grounded in these convictions, we oppose the extreme cuts in poverty-important programs that are proposed in the House of Representatives' budget/debt-ceiling bill. If these cuts became law, 10 million low-income families could lose access to health care, a million could lose food assistance, and a million could lose rental assistance. A million of the nation's poorest children could lose cash support. This bill would also curtail the IRS' program of tax enforcement, in effect giving high-income tax cheaters as much money as it would take away from low-income families through cuts in Medicaid, SNAP, and TANF.

We also urge quick action to raise the debt ceiling. A U.S. default would likely bring financial crisis and recession, with devastating effects for many Americans. The economic consequences of gridlock in Washington will mean fewer job opportunities and therefore further increases in poverty and hunger.

The end of pandemic assistance programs has already increased poverty, with churches and charities again swamped by requests for help. We pray that all of you, our elected leaders, will seek a path forward that protects the poor and steers clear of a financial crisis.

Sincerely,

Rev. Dr. Paul Baxley, Executive Coordinator, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

Rev. Dr. David Beckmann, Dean's Advisor for Political and Economic Justice, Virginia Theological Seminary; Coordinator, Circle of Protection

John Carr, Founder, Initiative on Catholic Social Thought and Public Life, Georgetown University

Rev. Eugene Cho, President, Bread for the World

The Most Rev. Michael B. Curry, Presiding Bishop and Primate, The Episcopal Church

The Most Rev. Elizabeth Eaton, Presiding Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Rev. Walter Kim, President, National Association of Evangelicals

Rev. Dr. Jo Anne Lyon, General Superintendent Emerita, The Wesleyan Church

Rev. Carlos Malavé, President, Latino Christian National Network

Bishop Vashti Murphy McKenzie, Interim President and General Secretary, National Council of Churches

Bridget Moix, General Secretary, Friends Committee on National Legislation

Rev. Ted Penton, SJ, Secretary of Justice and Ecology, Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States

Bishop A.J. Richardson, Senior Bishop, Tenth Episcopal District, African Methodist Episcopal Church

Rev. Dr. Gabriel Salguero, President and Founder, National Latino Evangelical Coalition

Rev. Lori Tapia, National Pastor for Hispanic Ministries, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the U.S. and Canada

Rev. Adam Russell Taylor, President, Sojourners

Jacquelyn Dupont-Walker, AME Church - Social Action Commission

Rev. Jim Wallis, Inaugural Chair and Founding Director, Center on Faith and Justice at Georgetown University

Dr. Barbara Williams-Skinner, Co-Convener, National African American Clergy Network; President, Skinner Leadership Institute