



CIRCLE *of* PROTECTION

March 11, 2025

Dear President Trump and Members of Congress,

We are members of the coordinating committee of the Circle of Protection, a coalition of church bodies and related ministries representing the breadth of Christianity in this country—Mainline Protestants and Evangelicals, Anglicans, Roman Catholics, Orthodox Churches, Pentecostals, Historic Black Churches, Hispanic Churches, and Peace Churches. Together, the church bodies in the Circle of Protection have close to 100 million members. The church leaders in the Circle of Protection are united across theological, sociological, and political differences by our shared faith in Christ and the motivation it inspires to pray and work for a time when God’s kingdom comes “on earth as it is in heaven.” Our churches across the country are on the front lines of assistance to people in need in both rural and urban America and around the world.

We are opposed to a continuing resolution that would cut programs that help poor and vulnerable people, partly by giving the President broader unilateral authority to make decisions about government spending.

The *Congressional Quarterly* estimates that the continuing resolution released on Saturday would cut \$13 billion from domestic and foreign aid. It would also give the executive branch more authority to make spending decisions, and we think this shift in authority would add substantially to the harm this resolution would do to poor and vulnerable people.

One of the first things the administration did was to dismantle USAID. We have followed the process closely, since U.S. foreign aid has played an important role in the dramatic reduction of global hunger and poverty during recent decades. Presidents and members of Congress from both parties have worked together to increase funding and improve the quality of aid.

Our churches are connected to churches around the world, and we are now hearing directly from poor communities that have been affected by the USAID shutdown. A congregation that supports an HIV/AIDS clinic in Uganda has learned that nearly all the clinic’s staff have been laid off. A network of African priests tells us that projects that were helping poor farm families improve their livelihoods have ended.

The Supreme Court last week declined to halt a lower court order that required the administration to unfreeze \$2 billion in foreign aid. Arguments in the lower court are still ongoing.

As we read news reports of how the administration is making big changes across the government, we note that many of these changes will make life harder for low-income and vulnerable people. This makes us wary of Congress giving yet more authority to the administration.

We urge Congress to pass a short-term continuing resolution and conclude bipartisan negotiations of an appropriation package that will protect people who are poor and vulnerable.

Eighty-eight percent of the members of the 119th Congress identify themselves as Christian, and we especially appeal to them to consider our Lord's priorities. You will remember Jesus' vision of the final judgment of nations in Matthew 25. We will be judged, Jesus said, by how we treat people who are hungry or thirsty, immigrants, people who can't afford proper clothes, people who need medical care, and prisoners.

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

Rev. Galen Carey, Vice President of Government Relations, National Association of Evangelicals

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

Bishop Vashti Murphy McKenzie, President, National Council of Churches

Bridget Moix, General Secretary, Friends Committee on National Legislation

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

Rev. Adam Russell Taylor, President, Sojourners

Rev. Heather Taylor, Managing Director, Bread for the World

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