



CIRCLE *of* PROTECTION

September 15, 2025

To the Members of Congress,

We represent church bodies and Christian organizations that include 100 million people. We are writing to urge you to protect and expand poverty-focused programs in the funding decisions you will make over the next few months.

As people of faith our consistent moral criterion is how national choices and policies will help or hurt those who are poor or vulnerable. We assess budgets, appropriations, rescissions, and other legislation based on whether they lift up or threaten the lives and dignity of the “least of these” (Mathew 25).

In recent decades, Congress has played an important role in reducing poverty in our country and worldwide. U.S. child poverty dropped by 50 percent between 1993 and 2019, mainly because Congress strengthened the focus of our social safety-net on children and work incentives.¹ Between 1990 and 2024, the fraction of the world’s people in extreme poverty dropped from four in ten to one in ten, partly because the U.S. Congress expanded and improved our country’s international aid program.²

Thus, we are dismayed by this year’s cut-backs to programs that provide help and opportunity for people in need. The One Big Beautiful Bill Act mandates the biggest reduction in SNAP food assistance in history, and its cut-backs in health care will leave 15 million more Americans uninsured.³ Actions by the Administration and Congress have also dramatically curtailed international aid, including life-saving medications and humanitarian assistance.

When members of our two major parties work together and invest in programs that help poor children and families, it is not right that the Administration can unilaterally abandon these commitments. The Administration has held back hundreds of billions of dollars in

¹ “Expanded Safety Net Drives Sharp Drop in Child Poverty,” *New York Times*, September 11, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/11/us/politics/child-poverty-analysis-safety-net.html>. Based on a study by Child Trends, also published on September 11, 2022, <https://www.childtrends.org/publications/lessonsfrom-a-historic-decline-in-child-poverty>.

² World Bank, *Global Poverty Update and Outlook: Poverty, Prosperity, and Planet Report 2024*, 51, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/poverty-prosperity-and-planet>

³ Sharon Parrott, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, September 9, 2025, <https://www.cbpp.org/press/statements/republican-megabill-will-erode-much-of-the-progress-on-health-care-coverage-and-push>. This analysis is based on estimates from the Congressional Budget Office.

congressionally approved funding, including a disproportionate share for programs that help disadvantaged people. OMB's pending pocket rescission again targets international aid.

In the financial decisions of the next few months, we ask you to give priority to people in need by increasing rather than further cutting funding for struggling people—and that you take action to ensure that the funds Congress approves are used for their intended purposes.

According to the Pew Research Center, 95 percent of the members of the 119th Congress are religiously affiliated, and 87 percent are Christian. We are eager to meet with members of Congress or their staff to discuss these issues and the religious convictions that undergird our policy positions.

Dr. Paul Baxley, Executive Coordinator, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

Rev. Dr. David Beckmann, Dean's Advisor, Virginia Theological Seminary; Coordinator, Circle of Protection

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

Rev. Eugene Cho, President and CEO, Bread for the World

Bishop Vashti Murphy McKenzie, President, National Council of Churches

Rev. Carlos Malavé, President, Latino Christian National Network

Bridget Moix, General Secretary, Friends Committee on National Legislation

Kerry Alys Robinson, President and CEO, Catholic Charities USA

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

Rev. Adam Russell Taylor, President, Sojourners

Bishop Julius C. Trimble, General Secretary, General Board of Church and Society, United Methodist Church

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