

INTERRELIGIOUS WORKING GROUP ON DOMESTIC HUMAN NEEDS

*Is not this the fast that I choose; to loose the bonds of wickedness,
to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?
Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the poor homeless into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?*

Isaiah 58:6-7

November 8, 2005

Dear Representative,

As communities of faith, we are grounded in a shared tradition of justice and compassion. Throughout the year, we have been advocating that Congress consider the impact the fiscal year 2006 federal budget will have on all of our brothers and sisters – particularly the least of these among us. **We speak out now because we are alarmed that the budget reconciliation package soon to be considered on the House floor will do great harm to our nation's most vulnerable members, particularly children. Given the needs our country is facing, we should be working to reduce hunger and poverty, not cutting vital supports and investments in families and communities. We urge you to speak out against these cuts and to vote against the spending reconciliation bill.**

As you know, the ranks of people in poverty, people at risk of hunger, and people without access to affordable health care are on the rise. Tragically, children bear an enormous share of the burden of poverty and hunger in our nation. Nearly one in five children in our nation lives below the poverty line and nearly one in five lives in households that are food insecure. As a nation, we must strive to give our children, precious in the eyes of God, all available opportunities to thrive, learn, grow, and lead. Unfortunately, the House budget reconciliation package would leave children further behind. We are especially concerned that the package would:

- Cut funding for Child Support Enforcement by \$4.9 billion, reducing states' ability to collect child support and distribute it to children. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that, as a result, children would receive \$24 billion less in child support over the next 10 years.
- Cut \$9.5 billion from Medicaid, in part by weakening cost-sharing protections for many children and ending requirements that children on Medicaid receive comprehensive health services. These changes would mean that millions of low-income children will not get medical treatment when they need it.
- Deny food stamps to about 300,000 people by cutting the Food Stamp Program by \$844 million. The majority of those who would be impacted are members of low-wage working families with children. The package includes a provision that would deny many lawfully-present immigrants eligibility for food stamps for seven years after entering the United States.
- Incorporate the reauthorization of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program in reconciliation, increasing the work requirements for TANF recipients without adequate

funding for child care to meet the needs of working parents. Some 270,000 children in low-income working families would likely lose child care assistance by 2010 under this plan and low-income parents will have less time to spend with their children.

- Cut federal foster care by \$577 million, eliminating benefits for many relatives caring for abused and neglected children.

Our faith traditions speak with dramatic unity in declaring that a fundamental moral test for a nation is how it treats the least, the last, and the lost in society. The federal budget is a key measure in this test and by denying vital nutrition, health care, child care, and child welfare assistance to needy children and families, the House Budget Reconciliation package fails to respond to the needs of the least of these among us. We urge you to reject these cuts and make better choices for children, families, and the nation as a whole.

Sincerely,

American Baptist Churches USA
American Friends Service Committee
Brethren Witness/Washington Office
Church of the Brethren
Church Women United
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.
NETWORK: A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Washington Office
United Church of Christ Justice and Witness Ministries.
United Methodist Church – General Board of Church and Society

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