



CIRCLE *of* PROTECTION

December 17, 2018

Dear Members of Congress,

As leaders of the Circle of Protection, an unprecedented group of Christian religious leaders from all major families of Christianity, we urge you to prioritize programs that address poverty and hunger in the U.S. and around the world in the remaining FY '19 spending package. In Proverbs 31:9, we are reminded of our responsibility to “*Speak up, judge righteously, champion the poor and the needy.*” The federal budget should reflect a government that provides hope, opportunity, and a place at the table for all, especially for those who are struggling at the margins of society.

We call on you to prioritize funding for low-income programs in the year-end spending bills. Many low-income programs continue to be underfunded. Less than one in four eligible households receive any form of federal housing assistance because of a lack of funding. Also, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and the Summer EBT program are critical for child nutrition and development.

Additionally, we urge you to **robustly fund life-saving humanitarian, peacebuilding, and poverty-focused international assistance**, both as an expression of our national values and in recognition of how this contributes to a more peaceful, prosperous, and secure world. Since 2000, the number of people living in extreme poverty has been cut more than half. However, we remain concerned about the growing refugee and global food crisis that threaten the lives and stability of hundreds of millions of people.

Rather than increased expenditures on militarizing the border and detaining immigrant families, we urge Congress to invest these resources in development and humanitarian assistance to help countries in the Northern Triangle and elsewhere respond to and address the hunger, extreme poverty, and violence that causes forced migration. Furthermore, we encourage Congress to fund community-based alternatives to detention, which are more effective, cost efficient, and humane than expanded detention.

These are biblical issues for us, not just political or partisan concerns. In Matthew 25, Jesus identified himself with those who are immigrants, poor, sick, homeless and imprisoned, and challenged his followers to welcome and care for them as we would care for Jesus himself.

Sincerely,

Members of the Circle of Protection Steering Committee



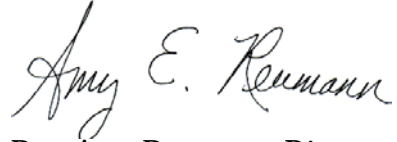
Leith Anderson, President, National Association of Evangelicals



Diane Randall, Executive Secretary, Friends Committee on National Legislation



* Rev. David Beckmann, President, Bread for the World



Rev. Amy Reumann, Director of Advocacy, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



Rebecca Blachly, Director of the Office of Government Relations, The Episcopal Church



Dr. Gabriel Salguero, President, National Latino Evangelical Coalition



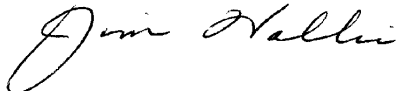
The Most Rev. Bishop Frank J. Dewane, Chairman, Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops



Rev. Lori Tapia, National Pastor for Hispanic Ministries, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)



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



* Rev. Jim Wallis, President and Founder, Sojourners



* Rev. Carlos Malavé, Executive Director, Christian Churches Together U.S.A.



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



Sister Donna Markham, OP, PhD, President and CEO, Catholic Charities USA



Jim Winkler, President and General Secretary, National Council of Churches

* Circle of Protection Steering Committee Co-
Coordinators are marked with an asterisk