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Catholic Charities Leaders Take Message to the Capitol

On May 5, Catholic Charities Directors from around the country brought their message for housing and health care reform to the capitol. During the annual Capitol Hill day, Catholic Charities USA Diocesan Directors met with their U.S Representatives and Senators to ask them to support funding for key human needs program, to develop health care for all, and to pass a comprehensive plan to create affordable housing and address the current housing crisis. This year, the Capitol Hill day occurred at a critical time as Congress finalized legislation to reform the McKinney-Vento homeless program and other measures to address the current foreclosure crisis.

For more information, please contact Desmond Brown, Senior Director of Government Affairs, dbrown@catholiccharitiesusa.org.

President Obama Releases Detailed Budget Request

On May 7, President Obama released a more detailed fiscal year 2010 budget request. The new request provided more information on policy directions and spending priorities of the administration. Some highlights of the request include:

- *Health Care:* The budget establishes a reserve fund of \$600 billion as a down payment to reform the nation's health care system.
- *Job Training:* The budget provides investments in Youth Build and other new investments in green jobs and employment opportunities in other growth sectors.
- *Housing:* The budget requests \$4.5 billion for the Community Development Block Grant, and provides new funding for the low-income housing trust fund and the Section 8 programs. These investments represent a start for the comprehensive response that will be necessary to reduce homelessness and increase affordable housing across the country.

- *Other Vulnerable Populations:* The budget provides \$87 million funding for a new home visitation program that will support families and children during the early stages of life and reduce child abuse and neglect. The budget requests \$20 million to fund innovative programs to improve the foster care system. It also provides \$50 million to strengthen communities. These funds will help local non-profits build capacity to assist low-income families find and retain employment.

Typically, the President releases a detailed budget request in early February and Congress subsequently passes a budget resolution. Due to time constraints with an election year, the Obama administration released an overview of the budget request in February, and Congress passed the fiscal year (FY) 2010 concurrent budget resolution on April 29. The \$3.56 trillion budget resolution caps discretionary spending for FY 2010 at \$1.086 trillion, \$10 billion less than President Obama's request.

The budget resolution is nonbinding and does not require the President's signature. It serves as a blueprint for key legislative decisions on taxes, appropriations, and entitlement programs later in the year. The budget resolution sets the spending limits for appropriations and authorizing committees in Congress.

Catholic Charities USA will keep you updated on the appropriations process.

More details on the President's budget are [available here](#).

For more information, please contact Desmond Brown, Senior Director of Government Affairs, dbrown@catholiccharitiesusa.org.

Congress Advances Housing Bills

On May 6, the U.S. Senate passed the "Helping Families Save Their Homes Act of 2009" (S.896) by a vote of 91-5. The bill provides a series of protections to individuals at risk of foreclosure, as well as other provisions to reduce homelessness and protect renters. It includes provisions to extend or reduce the mortgage repayment period; a requirement that homeowners facing foreclosure attempt to notify the lender before he or she can apply for judicial modification; safe harbor from liability to mortgage servicers who engage in loan modifications, workouts, or other loss mitigation; and payments to existing servicers of up to \$1,000 for each successful refinance.

During the Senate debate, several amendments were passed to provide additional protections to renters and homeowners. This includes an amendment offered by Senator Jack Reed (D-RI) to reauthorize the McKinney-Vento Act. It consolidates three McKinney programs: Shelter Plus Care, Section 8 Single Room Occupancy, and Supportive Housing. The amendment also renames the Emergency Shelter Grant program as the Emergency Solution Grant program, and provides other incentives to reduce homelessness. S.896 also includes an amendment by Senator John Kerry (D-MA) that provides protections to renters living in properties being foreclosed. It would allow such renters to remain in the property for the remainder of their lease or be entitled to up to 90 days notice before eviction for tenants without leases.

A similar measure, H.R. 1106, passed the House on March 5. However, that bill did not include the McKinney-Vento or tenant protection provisions. It also includes a bankruptcy provision that was not included in the Senate version.

On May 7, the U.S. House of Representatives approved the "Mortgage Reform and Anti-Predatory Lending Act of 2009" (H.R. 1728) by a vote of 300-114. The bill provides a number of protections to borrowers, but also places new restrictions that would prevent borrowers from

fabricating their incomes to qualify for loans. The bill aims to protect homebuyers from some of the abusive practices faulted for the current foreclosure crisis. This includes changes that:

- Ban compensation structures that promote conflict of interest by rewarding originators of loans.
- Require originators to disclose to potential buyers the compensation they receive for the transaction.
- Require federal banking agencies to institute regulations requiring creditors that make residential mortgages to retain a portion of the mortgage if the creditor transfers, sells, or conveys such loans to a third party.
- Establish a grant program through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to provide legal assistance to low-income homeowners and tenants regarding homeownership preservation and foreclosure prevention.

Additionally, the bill provides protections for renters if the home they live in goes into foreclosure. The bill would require proper notification for such renters and additional time for them to relocate before the property is foreclosed.

More information on H.R. 1728 is [available here](#).

For more information, please contact Desmond Brown, Senior Director of Government Affairs, dbrown@catholiccharitiesusa.org.

Unemployment Rises to 8.9 Percent

On May 8, the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) released the most recent unemployment numbers. In April, the number of unemployed persons increased by 563,000, for a total of 13.7 million unemployed workers. The national unemployment rate increased to 8.9 percent, up from 8.5 percent in March. Over the past year, 6 million persons have become unemployed. While the unemployment rate is at its highest mark since 1983, the pace of job loss slowed in April compared to previous months, a sign that the sharp economic decline may be abating.

More information on the recent unemployment data is [available here](#).

For more information, please contact Kellyann McClain, Policy Analyst, kmcclain@catholiccharitiesusa.org.

Senators Introduce Child Care Legislation

On May 7, Senator Bob Casey (D-PA) and Senator Blanche Lincoln (D-AR) introduced two bills to expand child care access and quality. The first, entitled the “Starting Early, Starting Right Act” (S. 1000), would increase federal child care funding for children from low-income families. In addition, these funds would increase the quality of care by requiring states to monitor providers as well as provide training. Since fiscal year 2002, federal funding has been essentially flat, allowing only one in seven eligible children to receive federal child care assistance. Senator Lincoln explained that her own state of Arkansas was forced to tighten eligibility standards due to insufficient funding, causing a drop of 1,300 children last July from the program. Currently,

hundreds of thousands of children are on waiting lists for child care assistance across the country.

The second bill, the "Child Care Facilities Financing Act of 2009" (S. 1002), would provide federal support for the funding and technical assistance needs related to the physical environment of child care facilities. It would create a pool of flexible capital for the acquisition, construction, renovation, and improvement of child care and education facilities.

Catholic Charities USA will keep you updated on these bills.

For more information, please contact Kellyann McClain, Policy Analyst, kmcclain@catholiccharitiesusa.org.

Senate Finance Committee Advances Conversation on Health Care Reform

On May 5, the U.S. Senate Finance Committee held the second of three roundtable discussions on health care reform. The discussion focused on strategies to provide health care coverage to all Americans. In his opening remarks, Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-MT) noted that the U.S. is the only developed country without health care coverage for all of its citizens. In 2007 and 2008, 87 million Americans went without health insurance for some period of that time. Another 25 million Americans are currently "underinsured" and are not able to afford their out of pocket medical expenses. With rising unemployment rates, an increasing number of people are becoming uninsured. In the current economy, 14,000 people stand to lose health care coverage every day. For every one percent increase in the unemployment rate, enrollment in Medicaid and CHIP increases by one million.

Senator Baucus stressed that it is important that all Americans have coverage because those lacking proper health insurance generally experience poorer health than the insured. An estimated 22,000 uninsured adults die prematurely each year due to a lack of proper care. Even those who have health care coverage feel the effects of this crisis. Roughly eight percent of the average health care premiums can be attributed to cost-shifts from health providers when the uninsured can not pay for care. In 2009, that is \$1,100 per family and \$410 per individual.

Committee Ranking Member Chuck Grassley (R-IA) reiterated that the current health care system is not working. He underscored the need to find common ground on solutions that will provide affordable coverage for everyone. Witnesses offered recommendations to expand health care coverage including expanding public programs like Medicare and Medicaid, expanding the model used in the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHBP), and using a health insurance exchange model.

The Senate Finance Committee will hold the final round table discussion this week on financing health care reform.

To read more including Member and witness statements, [go here](#).

For more information, please contact Kellyann McClain, Policy Analyst, kmcclain@catholiccharitiesusa.org.

House Committee Holds Hearing on Adult Education

On May 5, the U.S. House Committee on Education and Labor, Subcommittee on Higher Education, Lifelong Learning, and Competitiveness held a hearing to identify best practices for improving adult education and family literacy. This hearing was part of a series of hearings to identify ways to strengthen the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). The WIA program provides employment training, vocational rehabilitation, and other employment services to youth, dislocated workers, and adults. The program is due for reauthorization this year.

In his opening statement, Subcommittee Chairman Rubén Hinojosa (D-TX) expressed his desire to see additional funding and programmatic improvements in WIA. He stressed that a key challenge for the reauthorization of the WIA is to develop innovative models that will significantly expand the program's capacity to deliver adult education that will fully develop the talents of the entire population. Witnesses on the panel included David Rere, President of Dollar General Corporation; Kathy Cooper, Policy Associate, Office of Adult Basic Education, Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; Martin Finsterbusch, Executive Director, VALUE, Inc; Donna Kinerney, PhD., Instructional Dean, Adult ESOL & Literacy Program, Montgomery College; and Robert Lanterman, Program Director, Long Beach Family Literacy. Each witness provided a detailed set of policy recommendations and strategies to improve adult literacy and adult participation in the workforces

More information on the hearing is [available here](#).

For more information, please contact Desmond Brown, Senior Director of Government Affairs, dbrown@catholiccharitiesusa.org.

Special Announcement Regarding Justice for Immigrants Regional Training

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Justice for Immigrants (JFI) campaign will conduct a training in Colorado Springs on May 19-20, 2009. The purpose of the training is to convene supporters of comprehensive immigration reform (CIR) to strengthen and grow the base and arm supporters with updated messages and educational pieces to continue to push for CIR.

JFI has identified Colorado and the surrounding states as prime areas of opportunity to move large numbers of Catholics and Catholic federal lawmakers to support CIR.

Event information, including the agenda, may be [found here](#).

A limited number of scholarships are available, and anyone interested in a scholarship should call 202-541-3165. Questions about the convening may also be directed to the same telephone number.

Immediately following the JFI convening is the Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. Annual Convening. CLINIC affiliates who register for CLINIC's convening can attend the JFI Regional Training for **free**. The conference is scheduled from May 20-22 in Colorado, Springs, CO. For more information, please visit [CLINIC's 12th Annual Convening website](#).

Please consider attending the training and convening and/or sharing this information with your networks.

For more information, please contact Lucreda Cobbs, Senior Director of Advocacy and Civic Engagement, lcobbs@catholiccharitiesusa.org.

CSG Justice Center Announces Second Chance Act Webinar: Guidance for Mentoring Grant Applicants

The Council of State Governments Justice Center is conducting a free webinar to help potential applicants respond to the Second Chance Act [solicitation for Mentoring Grants to Nonprofit Organizations](#) released on April 23, 2009 by the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), U.S. Department of Justice. Funding is available under this solicitation for nonprofit organizations and federally recognized Indian tribes to implement mentoring projects together with transitional services to promote the safe and successful reintegration into the community of individuals who have been incarcerated.

Time: May 11, 2009 at 2:00 P.M. Eastern Time
Speaker: Dr. Gary Dennis, BJA Senior Policy Advisor for Corrections

Dr. Dennis will explain the solicitation and application process, and answer frequently asked questions. The grant application deadline is May 21, 2009.

[Click here to register for the webinar.](#) This webinar is limited to the first 1,000 people who register.

For inquiries about this webinar, or to submit questions that you would like addressed, please contact Leah Kane at lkane@csg.org.

The webinar PowerPoint presentation, including audio, will be posted on the [Reentry Policy Council website](#) following the webinar.

The webinar is supported by the [Public Welfare Foundation](#), the [Annie E. Casey Foundation](#), and the [Joyce Foundation](#).

For more information, please contact Lucreda Cobbs, Senior Director of Advocacy and Civic Engagement, lcobbs@catholiccharitiesusa.org.

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