



Working to Reduce Poverty in America.

April 25, 2016

The Honorable John Hoeven
Chairman
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Hoeven and Ranking Member Shaheen:

As you begin work on the Fiscal Year 2017 Department of Homeland Security Appropriations, I write on behalf of Catholic Charities USA (CCUSA) and its national network of membership organizations to urge you to adequately fund and prioritize programs which provide support for people in need.

CCUSA represents more than 160 diocesan Catholic Charities member agencies. These agencies operate more than 2,600 service locations across 49 states, the District of Columbia, and five U.S. territories. Their diverse array of social services reached more than 8.7 million individuals in need last year. Through this work, our member organizations play a vital role in preparing for and responding to national disasters.

Natural and man-made disasters impact all corners of our country. While all people in the path of a disaster are impacted, the poorest in our society disproportionately feel the negative impacts of these event. CCUSA member agencies play a crucial role in building capacity to mitigate the impacts of these disasters and providing a timely and coordinated response during recovery efforts. Our nonprofit organizations are able to leverage private dollars in support of federal state and local recovery responses.

Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP): We urge you to maintain the current \$120 million level of funding for the Emergency Food and Shelter Program and to keep its administration at FEMA rather than transferring the program to HUD. The EFSP was created in 1983 to supplement the work of local service organizations to help people in need of emergency assistance. The program provides critical support for soup kitchens, food banks, shelter and other homeless prevention services in local jurisdictions based on an allocation formula using national population, employment, and poverty statistics. Since 2011, despite the continued need, the program has seen a 40% cut resulting in 500 fewer jurisdictions and 2,800 fewer human services agencies being able to participate in the program. The EFSP’s innovative funding model, which relies on a national board of leading social service organizations to distribute monies to local charitable and service organizations, provides a model for responsive, accountable and localized solutions to meeting the emergency needs of local communities. A move to HUD would only serve to weaken the effectiveness of the program.

Disaster Relief Fund (DRF): We urge to you to robustly fund federal assistance programs under the DRF, provide critical support for preparedness and rapid recovery from natural disasters. The generosity of the American people is evident by their response to natural disasters. A way to honor that generosity is to improve hazard mitigation and reduce the impact of disasters preemptively. A robust allocation of monies to the DRF will allow the nation to respond effectively and compassionately to victims of natural disasters, as well as

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bolster disaster mitigation and preparedness programs so that low income families are able to prepare for disasters. We would also ask you to encourage program implementation which takes into consideration the tremendous impact disasters have on persons in poverty.

National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP): We urge you to direct FEMA to develop incentives for group policies to be created and maintained to cover low income populations. We understand affordable NFIP policies are hard to balance with any consideration of actuarially sound pricing. But when people have to choose between buying food and paying for utilities, flood insurance policies are not within their ability to pay. Poverty is in fact the pre-existing condition which is preventing disaster assistance in many disasters. Insurance coverage would help low income persons more fully recover from disasters. We urge you to direct FEMA to develop mechanisms for 3rd party group policies to be maintained for persons in disasters who cannot afford to purchase and maintain flood insurance.

We thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Donna J. Markham, OP, PhD".

Sr. Donna Markham, OP, PhD
President & CEO
Catholic Charities USA