



Working to Reduce Poverty in America

March 11, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
U.S. House of Representatives
H-222 U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
U.S. Senate
S-230 U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader McConnell:

As the COVID-19 virus continues to spread, I urge Congress and the Administration to enact immediate and effective policies and appropriations to limit the impact of the virus, to support and protect lives, and stabilize our economy.

COVID-19 will have significant health and economic repercussions, especially for low-income and vulnerable persons. Mandatory measures such as limited travel, quarantines, and business and school closures will negatively impact the most vulnerable persons and families who are only one paycheck or crisis away from needing significant help.

Last year, Catholic Charities agencies served 12.5 million people throughout the United States and its territories providing compassionate assistance to those who come seeking help with rent and utilities, food and other basic needs.

As you consider legislation to address the COVID-19 crisis, we recommend: 1) additional funding for the National Emergency Food and Shelter program (EFSP) to help respond to local needs; 2) increase access to paid sick leave; 3) enhance unemployment insurance; 4) expand the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), and other nutrition programs; 5) extend homeless and affordable housing protection; 6) increase funding for the Social Services Block Grant, which provides additional resources to help local providers, communities, and states deliver critical human services to vulnerable families; 7) provide protective equipment for healthcare workers; 8) offer free Coronavirus testing; 9) provide affordable treatment for those who have the virus; and 10) increase the capacity of the medical system to deal with surges in demand.

Now is the time for our nation's leadership to put aside partisanship and work together to ensure the health and economic well-being of vulnerable persons, families and our nation.

Catholic Charities USA stands ready to work with Congress and the Administration to respond to this global pandemic.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sister Donna Markham, OP.".

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

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Charles Cornelio

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Sr. Donna Markham OP, PhD

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