



Working to Reduce Poverty in America

May 02, 2023

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin,
Chairwoman
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services and Education
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito,
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services and Education
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairwoman Baldwin and Ranking Member Moore Capito:

As you consider the Fiscal Year 2024 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education (Labor-HHS) appropriations bill, Catholic Charities USA (CCUSA) urges you to invest in programs that protect and support poor and vulnerable children, families, persons facing behavioral and mental health crises, and elderly persons.

Chair of the Board
Neal Black

President & CEO
Sr. Donna Markham OP, PhD

Episcopal Liaison
The Most Reverend
Frank J. Dewane
Bishop of Venice, FL

CCUSA is a national membership organization representing 167 diocesan Catholic Charities member agencies. These member agencies operate more than 3,500 service locations across 50 states, the District of Columbia, and five U.S. territories. The diverse array of social services offered by the agencies reached more than 15 million individuals in need last year.

While Catholic Charities agencies work every day to assist families in poverty, we cannot meet their needs alone. As high inflation continues to impact families and individuals, it is important to maintain funding for the crucial programs that serve millions of vulnerable people across our nation. We ask that you avoid cuts to key services and request, at a minimum, maintaining funding for the following programs at the Fiscal Year 2023 levels.

We request continuing key investments in the following programs for FY 2024:

Child Welfare Services: Full funding is necessary to implement the significant improvements made to the child welfare system under the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFA) (PL 115-123). These positive changes provide critical services to children and families involved with the child welfare system. Also necessary are the following: adequate investments to prevent child abuse and neglect, support for youth transition out of foster care, community-based family support, family preservation, family unification services, adoption promotion and support services, and increase in workforce capacity and training within the child welfare system.

Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) funding plays a critical role in allowing low-income families to place their children in safe and nurturing environments. As you well know, the child care industry has suffered as a result of the pandemic, leaving many families without access to quality and affordable health care. We urge you to support increased funding to invest in child care programs to ensure children have access to quality and affordable child care and ensure that teachers are paid an adequate wage.

Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) helps states to fund services in community-based organizations including employment services, education, housing, health, and nutrition programs. Congress must reject efforts to eliminate this program and should provide full funding.



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Employment and Training programs are essential, especially as the economy continues to recover. The rapidly shifting economy requires robust funding for workforce development programs to reduce unemployment. In this unprecedented moment, Congress must continue to support employment and training programs.

Head Start helps break the cycle of poverty by providing preschool children of low-income families with a comprehensive program to meet their emotional, social, health, nutritional and psychological needs. Congress should continue investing in this program.

Health Care and Mental Health access should be available to every American. Many low-income families struggle to cover all the costs associated with receiving health care, particularly mental health. Congress should expand and strengthen access to affordable health care and mental health services.

Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) provides vital assistance to low-income individuals to assist with the cost of utilities. It is imperative that Congress reject the elimination of this critical program and provide sufficient resources to keep pace with the increasing utility costs.

Refugee Resettlement assists refugees and other special populations in obtaining economic self-sufficiency in the United States. When refugees come to our nation, resettlement agencies assist families with finding a home, securing jobs, learning English, and integrating themselves into their new communities. Congress should provide the appropriate funding level for this program.

Services to Seniors: The Older Americans Act (OAA) is the major vehicle for the delivery of social and nutrition services for older individuals. The OAA funds community programs, community service opportunities for seniors, and other protective services. Funding for senior programs has been flat for several years with no adjustment for inflation. Increased funding for senior programs that provide important preventative health services, home delivery of meals, and other support services to elderly Americans, including seniors suffering from Alzheimer's disease, is necessary.

Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) plays an important role in the types of services nonprofit agencies can provide to low-income people including services to the elderly, persons with disabilities, and neglected children. Therefore, the SSBG should be fully funded.

Unemployment Insurance provides cash benefits to eligible workers who are unemployed through no fault of their own. The program in most states provides up to 26 weeks of benefits to unemployed workers, replacing about half of their previous wages, on average. Congress must provide adequate resources to expand and extend Unemployment Insurance through the economic recovery to ensure no American is left behind.

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act which is up for reauthorization this year targets employment, education, and training services to low-skilled and low-income workers that build skills and increase access to jobs that pay a living wage. Continued investment in WIOA for undereducated and underskilled workers is a necessity.

Hyde and Weldon Amendments

Lastly, we urge you to include the Hyde and Weldon Amendments, which provide critical protections for human life. These long-standing, historically bipartisan policy riders prohibit federal funding of abortions (Hyde amendment) and protect hospitals and other institutional and individual health care providers that decline to provide, pay for, provide coverage of, or refer for abortions (Weldon amendment).

The gospel mandate of "serving the least of our brothers and sisters" calls us to care for our society's most vulnerable members. Individuals and governments have a special obligation to

prioritize the basic needs of the poor. Our policies must protect the poor and vulnerable and promote the common good by caring for the well-being of each member of our national family. CCUSA recognizes that Congress is faced with many difficult choices, but we urge you to please remember those who are the most vulnerable.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anthony J. Granado", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Anthony J. Granado
Vice President, Government Relations
Catholic Charities USA