



July 31, 2025

The Honorable Susan Collins
Chairwoman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
S-146 U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Appropriations
S-146 U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health, and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
170 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health, and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
141 Senate Hart Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Collins, Ranking Member Murray, Chairwoman Capito, Ranking Member Baldwin:

As you consider the Fiscal Year 2026 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, seniors, families, and people facing behavioral and mental health crises, and workforce development and training.

CCUSA is a national membership organization representing 168 diocesan Catholic Charities member agencies. These member agencies operate at more than 4,000 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. Therefore, we ask that you avoid cuts to key services and fully fund programs that provide crucial support to those struggling to make ends meet.

Ideally, we urge you to at a minimum restore previous cuts to programs enacted under the FY2025 Appropriations and build on the previous investment of \$226.8 billion made in Fiscal Year 2024, and invest in the following programs for FY 2026:

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 an increase in workforce capacity and training within the child welfare system.

Childcare and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) funding is critical in allowing low-income families to place their children in safe and nurturing environments. Childcare is a necessity for working families. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that 15 million children in the U.S. with parents in the workforce may potentially need childcare. However, quality childcare costs rapidly outpace most expenses, including housing and higher education. The national average cost of childcare in 2023 was \$11,582 per year per child (Child Care Aware of America). In addition, the childcare industry has suffered because of the pandemic. Increased funding for childcare programs is a way to relieve working parents struggling to make ends meet by offsetting childcare costs, ensuring children have access to quality and affordable care, and paying childcare workers an adequate wage.

The 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 any effort to eliminate this program and should provide full funding.

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

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

Refugee Resettlement: We urge you to allocate funding for the costs related to the Office of Refugee Resettlement's processing of refugees and the care and placement of unaccompanied noncitizen children with sponsors and assist refugees and other special populations in obtaining economic self-sufficiency in the United States.

Services to Seniors: The Older Americans Act (OAA) is the primary 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 vital preventative health services, home delivery of meals, and other support services to elderly Americans, including seniors suffering from Alzheimer's disease, is necessary.

The Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) plays an essential role in the types of services nonprofit agencies can provide to low-income people, including services to the elderly, people with disabilities, and neglected children. Therefore, 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—these benefits replace 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.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, which has been pending reauthorization since the 118th Congress, 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. In addition, 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 and enhance digital skills training programs. In this unprecedented moment, Congress must continue to support employment and training programs. Continued investment in WIOA for undereducated and under-skilled workers is a necessity, as well as aligning workforce development with state and local economic development goals.

Lastly, we urge you to include the **Hyde and Weldon Amendments**, which provide critical protection 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 healthcare 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. We recognize that Congress is faced with many difficult choices, but we urge you to prioritize our nation's most vulnerable.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kerry Alys Robinson".

Kerry Alys Robinson
President & CEO
Catholic Charities USA