



CIRCLE *of* PROTECTION

January 22, 2019

Dear Members of Congress,

As members of the Circle of Protection Steering Committee, we come together as leaders from a wide array of Christian bodies and organizations. Since 2011, we have worked together to maintain a Circle of Protection around people struggling with hunger, poverty, and injustice. Micah 6 tells us “to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8). For this reason, **we urge you to immediately end the partial government shutdown by fully funding the government and to negotiate humane and effective ways to address immigration.**

The partial shutdown has dire consequences for individuals across the country, particularly those facing hunger and food insecurity. The longer the shutdown continues, the greater the threats to people who rely on SNAP, WIC, school meals, and other nutrition assistance programs as well as on millions of others who will be struggling to pay the mortgage and purchase basic needs for their family. Tens of millions of low-income children, seniors, people with disabilities, working parents, and others could see their SNAP benefits cut significantly or even eliminated if the government shutdown continues into March or beyond. In addition, nearly 800,000 federal employees are not receiving paychecks.

The shutdown’s implications also may be severe for low-income residents in housing programs. With affordable housing contracts suspended, more than 40,000 low-income residents are already at risk of losing their housing. By March, unless the government reopens, more than two million households who receive housing vouchers won’t get their rental assistance. Landlords will have to either absorb losses or tenants will have to try to pay the rent hike or possibly face eviction.

Churches and faith-based charities will always respond, as best we can, to spikes in need and services across the country and abroad, but we do not have the capacity to fill such a sharp increase in demand caused by this partial shutdown. Congress is encouraged to reopen the government immediately.

Congress should negotiate humane and effective ways to address immigration. Instead of wasting money and efforts on measures that experts repeatedly affirm are ineffective, Congress should invest resources in development and humanitarian assistance needed to help countries in the Northern Triangle and elsewhere respond to and address the hunger, extreme poverty, and violence that forces migration. Furthermore, we encourage Congress to fund community-based alternatives to detention, which are more effective, cost efficient, and humane than expanded detention.

These are biblical issues for us, not political or partisan concerns. In Matthew 25, Jesus identified himself with those who are immigrants, poor, sick, homeless, and imprisoned, and challenged his followers to welcome and care for them as we would care for Jesus himself.

As Christian leaders in the Circle of Protection, our concern is how legislation impacts the poor and most vulnerable, and many of our organizations have strongly encouraged our constituencies to contact their senators and representatives to end this partial shutdown on behalf of the people Christ has asked us to protect. We will continue to pray, mobilize, and advocate on behalf of our neighbors facing food insecurity and economic hardship.

Sincerely,

Members of the Circle of Protection Steering Committee



Leith Anderson, President, National Association of Evangelicals



* Rev. Carlos Malavé, Executive Director, Christian Churches Together U.S.A.



* Rev. David Beckmann, President, Bread for the World



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



Rebecca Blachly, Director of the Office of Government Relations, The Episcopal Church



Diane Randall, Executive Secretary, Friends Committee on National Legislation



Rev. Dr. Timothy Tee Boddie, General Secretary and Chief Administrative Officer, Progressive National Baptist Convention



Dr. Gabriel Salguero, President, National Latino Evangelical Coalition



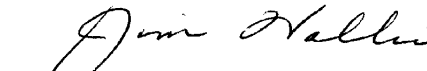
Dr. Iva Carruthers, General Secretary, Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference



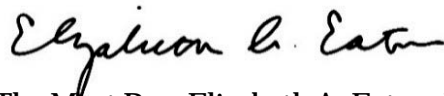
Rev. Lori Tapia, National Pastor for Hispanic Ministries, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)



The Most Rev. Bishop Frank J. Dewane, Chairman, Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops



* Rev. Jim Wallis, President and Founder, Sojourners



The Most Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton, Presiding Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



* Dr. Barbara Williams-Skinner, Co-Convener, National African American Clergy Network and President, Skinner Leadership Institute



Rev. Dr. Jo Anne Lyon, Ambassador and General Superintendent Emerita, Wesleyan Church

* Circle of Protection Steering Committee Co-ordinators are marked with an asterisk