



March 23, 2021

Dear President Biden,

The Interreligious Working Group on Domestic Human Needs (DHN) represents a wide variety of religious organizations and faith traditions. We work to advance federal policies that will address the root causes of poverty so all individuals can live with dignity, ensuring a secure future for themselves and their families.

First, we write to thank you for your leadership on the American Rescue Plan. We applaud its passage and the enormous impact it will have on the millions of people struggling in the face of the pandemic and economic fallout.

Second, we write because we believe that Building Back Better must advance economic justice and racial equity. Upgrades to our nation's physical infrastructure are inextricable from critical investments to end poverty, including policies that address the history and ongoing harms of systemic racism. To that end, in your infrastructure recovery package, we urge you to center racially equitable policy outcomes and prioritize the following:

1) Support workers and families:

- **Make permanent the expansions of the Earned Income Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit** from the American Rescue Plan. This will cut childhood poverty by nearly 50% and provide greater equity in the tax code.
- **Institute economic triggers** on boosts to SNAP and other nutrition assistance programs, unemployment assistance, and FMAP.
- **Institute a national, permanent family and medical paid leave program and create affordable childcare.**

2) Invest in sustainable infrastructure, specifically housing infrastructure and access to high-speed internet:

- **Meet the Biden Campaign's commitment of reinforcing the Housing Trust Fund** by a minimum of \$20 billion for longer term affordable housing needs and allocating \$70 billion to help repair our nation's deteriorating public housing stock. We also support **marking \$16 billion for tribal low-income housing needs** while **expanding housing choice vouchers** so that all households eligible for assistance receive support.
- **Make high-speed internet accessible, affordable, and nationwide**, especially in rural areas.

3) Create good jobs:

- **Institute a subsidized jobs program that focuses on employing and training disenfranchised populations**, especially individuals with criminal records, disabilities, limited education or

inconsistent work history, people experiencing long-term unemployment, and those living in communities with especially high unemployment.

- **Promote jobs that support green energy and upgrade the country's infrastructure** with an emphasis on equitable access to clean water, clean air, and reliable electricity.
- **Raise the federal minimum wage** to a living wage that is indexed and abolish the subminimum wage for tipped workers.
- **Create a commission to address the legacy of Anti-Black racism and the of study reparations.**

We must raise responsible revenues to afford these necessary investments while addressing America's growing chasm in income and wealth inequality. Within the last year alone, the combined wealth of U.S. billionaires grew nearly 45% while child hunger soared. Therefore, we support raising taxes on wealthy individuals and corporations, as well as reducing the Pentagon's budget. This includes closing tax loopholes that allows U.S. corporations to transfer their wealth offshore to avoid paying taxes. **We urge you to work with Congress to roll back many of the tax cuts in the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act**, which benefited the wealthy.

We also know that many of these priorities will need to be built. Part of the infrastructure recovery package is about job creation and getting people back to work and into good paying jobs. This, however, must be done in an equitable way that accounts for the racial disparities in wealth, labor force participation and unemployment rate, which have all been exasperated by the COVID crisis. Therefore, when awarding infrastructure contracts, we ask that minority-owned businesses be prioritized.

We are grateful for your leadership in these challenging times, and we're here to support you however we can.

Sincerely,

Bread for the World

Catholic Labor Network

Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S.

Christian Reformed Church, Office of Social Justice

Church World Service

DC Dorothy Day Catholic Worker

Friends Committee on National Legislation

Islamic Circle of North America Council for Social Justice

Islamic Relief USA

Jesuit Conference of Canada and the USA, Office of Justice and Ecology

MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger

National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd

National Council of Churches

NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice

Presbyterian Church (USA), Office of Public Witness

Sojourners

United Church of Christ Justice and Witness Ministries

Union for Reform Judaism

The United Methodist Church – General Board of Church and Society