



November 14, 2017

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker of the House of Representatives
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader, House of Representatives
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Ryan and Leader Pelosi:

As members of the faith community, we know that tax decisions are moral decisions. Taxation choices show who we preference as a nation and who pays the price. These choices show who and what we care about as a nation. All of our faiths teach us that the center of our concern should be those at the economic margins of our society. Therefore, we, the interfaith community, are speaking with one voice.

We must oppose H.R. 1, the Tax Cut and Jobs Act, because the bill violates our faith values as well as the fundamental issues of tax fairness and fiscal discipline.

First, the Tax Cut and Jobs Act is fiscally irresponsible. It grows the deficit by \$1.5 trillion dollars over ten years. Growing deficits and debt threatens not only the fiscal health of our country, but it also threatens future funding for the programs that help countless families put food on the table and provide for their children. This additional \$1.5 trillion in lost revenues will lead directly to future cuts in critical anti-poverty programs and low-income services including Medicaid, SNAP, low-income housing assistance, and other critical services for families struggling to make ends meet. The tax system should be structured to support investments in programs that create economic opportunity and dignity for all, especially families struggling to make ends meet. This bill violates the moral responsibility to care for the vulnerable.

The Tax Cut and Jobs Act makes the tax code more regressive. The tax breaks included in the legislation are not targeted to low- and moderate-income individuals. Provisions such as repeal of the estate tax, lower rates for pass-through income, and lower tax rates for income between \$480,000 and \$1 million will give enormous benefit to those at the top. This proposal is the exact opposite of a moral mandate to focus on those who struggle the most.

At the same time low-income families are left out of the benefits of H.R. 1. The bill increases the Child Tax Credit, but without making the additional credit refundable or making any improvements for low-income households, 10 million children are completely left out of any benefit increase. We have grave concerns about the cuts to the Child Tax Credit and the American Opportunity Tax Credit for immigrant families. We also strongly oppose the way in which H.R. 1 inhibits low-income working families from accessing the EITC, arguably the most effective anti-poverty, pro-mobility program in the country. Yet again this bill fails a basic moral test.

Rather than cutting these key anti-poverty investments for working families, a morally faithful way forward would have Congress

1. Expanding the Earned Income Tax Credit so that no worker is taxed into poverty,
2. Expanding the Child Tax Credit for low income workers so that those who need the credit most benefit
3. Expanding the American Opportunity Credit so that students can more easily afford higher education which is critical for success.

These are faithfully moral choices that Congress can make.

We call on Congress to put the needs of working families and struggling communities first in creating a just tax system. All our faith traditions call us to prioritize struggling families and vulnerable communities in our laws and policies. We respectfully ask you to ensure that any tax changes taken as part of our tax debate be based on principles of fairness and shared commitment to the common good.

Sincerely,

Alliance of Baptists

American Baptist Home Mission Societies

Bread for the World

Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, US

Dominican Sisters ~ Grand Rapids

Franciscan Action Network

Friends Committee on National Legislation

Interfaith Worker Justice

Islamic Relief USA

Jesuit Conference, Office of Justice and Ecology

Leadership Conference of Women Religious

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

The Poligon Education Fund

Faith Action Network – Washington State

Union of Reform Judaism

United Church of Christ, Justice & Witness Ministries

'The United Methodist Church- General Board of Church and Society

Bishop Carroll A. Baltimore, Global Alliance Interfaith Networks

The Reverend Jennifer Butler, Faith In Public Lfe

Ms. Jacqui Burton, President, Conference of National Black Churches (CNBC)

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

Rev. Delman Coates, Ph.D., Senior Pastor, Mt. Ennon Baptist Church

The Reverend Dr. James Coleman, the All Nations Baptist Church, Washington, D.C

The Reverend Dr. Kendrick E Curry, PhD, M.Div., Pastor, the Pennsylvania Ave Baptist Church

Rev. Dr. Gerald L. Durley, Pastor Emeritus, Providence Baptist Church, Atlanta, Georgia

The Reverend Dr. Frederick Douglass Haynes, III, Senior Pastor, Friendship West Baptist Church, Dallas, TX, Chair, Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference

Dr. Cynthia L. Hale, Senior Pastor, Ray of Hope Baptist church

Dr. Obery M. Hendricks, Jr., Ph.D., Columbia University

Reverend Leslie Watson Malachi, National Director, African American Ministers in Action (AAMIA)

Rev. Dr. Walter Arthur McCray, President, National Black Evangelical Association

Bishop Frank Madison Reid, III, AME Ecumenical and Urban Affairs

Rev. Dr. Barbara A. Reynolds, Chaplain for Black Women for Positive Change

The Reverend Dr. W. Franklyn Richardson, Chairman, Conference of National Black Churches (CNBC)

The Reverend Dr. Cheryl J. Sanders, Th.D., Senior Pastor, Third Street Church of God, Professor of Christian Ethics, Howard University School of Divinity, Washington, D.C

The Reverend Joseph A.C. Smith, M.Div., President | Joseph AC Smith Ministries, Inc.

Dr. T. DeWitt Smith, Jr., Co-chair with Dr. Barbara Williams-Skinner and Dr. Otis Moss, Jr., National African-American Clergy Network

The Reverend Dr. Joan L. Wharton, One Church One Child of Maryland, Inc.