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March 18, 2020

United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senator:

On behalf of our 100,000 supporters nationwide and in the name of the common good, NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice would like to thank your tremendous effort to respond to the coronavirus pandemic by passing H.R. 6201, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act today. We know this bill provides a baseline of support for many vulnerable people and gives them the ability to care for themselves and their families.

As you move forward with passing a third package to address this crisis, we call on you to continue putting the needs of the most vulnerable first. To that end, we request inclusion of the following supports:

#### **SUPPORTING OUR PEOPLE**

- 1. Target rebate checks and refundable tax credits to low- and moderate-income individuals:** This crisis requires an urgent response. People need money to pay rent, utility bills, the mortgage and so much more. It is critical to get direct cash payments into the hands of those struggling. NETWORK supports sending \$2,000 to low and middle income individuals to address this need. It is critical to get cash payments into the hands of those who truly need it. In addition, this package should include an expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Child Tax Credit that will provide longer-term relief for vulnerable families and low-income individuals. The combination of these provisions will provide significant relief to those struggling to deal with the immediate and longer-term impact of this health crisis. The combination of these provisions will provide significant relief to those struggling to deal with the immediate and longer-term impacts of this health crisis.
- 2. Continue to strengthen, expand, and modernize Unemployment Insurance and Expanded Paid medical and family Leave:** H.R. 6201 included extending unemployment insurance and guaranteeing paid sick days, freeing some workers from worry about taking time off to care for family members or themselves. H.R. 6201 must be a down payment in coming legislation in the fight for a permanent universal benefit modeled through the PAID Act since coverage for all workers is essential for the health of our nation. Half-measures will not suffice when everything is on the line.
- 3. Continue to Boost Nutrition Assistance:** Families and individuals who live paycheck to paycheck already have a difficult time affording food. As workers lose their jobs due to the pandemic, the need for food assistance will only grow. The federal government must increase food assistance programs to meet this need.

4. **Increase Homelessness Assistance Funding:** Individuals experiencing homelessness are at increased risk of serious infection because they often live in congregated communities (like shelters and encampments), cannot self-quarantine, and often lack access to running water and other methods to prevent infection. Any comprehensive response to the coronavirus should include emergency assistance funding to help prevent housing instability and homelessness as a result of the outbreak. An emergency assistance fund would provide both short-term financial assistance and stability services to help households with the lowest incomes overcome an unforeseen economic shock that threatens their housing stability. In addition, to help ensure housing stability during the coronavirus outbreak, Congress should create a permanent emergency assistance fund modeled by the Eviction Crisis Act. Emergency assistance programs have a strong track record of success in places across the country and are among the most effective policy tools available to the federal government to stabilize people in times of crisis.
5. **Halt Evictions and Foreclosures:** Due to the mandated COVID-19 social distancing requirement, many individuals and families are unable to work or are forced to work reduced hours. This adversely affects household income and workers should not be forced out of their homes because of their inability to pay bills due to this unexpected pandemic. As such, the next emergency relief package must include provisions that include a 6-month moratorium on foreclosures and evictions, with no fees, penalties, or accrued interest on mortgage loans. Furthermore, the next package must include a provision that would suspend negative credit reporting during the moratorium period.
6. **Give special care and attention to at-risk communities:** Individuals at increased risk of infection include individuals in prison, immigrants and children in detention, in tribes and Native communities, and those in long-term care facilities. They must be protected from this deadly virus. We must ensure universal access to treatment for all members of our communities. Prisoners and immigrants in detention in particular are at risk for the spreading of this deadly disease. Medical professionals across the globe are recommending release of detained individuals to reduce the incarcerated population and lessen the odds of a massive outbreak in jails that health officials cannot manage. Immediate consideration should be given to grant compassionate release to all elderly prisoners who qualify, especially those who already have underlying health conditions. Now is also the time to reduce the detained population dramatically in the interest of public health. Consideration should also be given to immediately grant compassionate release to all elderly prisoners who qualify, especially those who already have underlying health conditions. Further, immigration enforcement including deportations and interior checkpoints should cease.

## **SUPPORTING OUR STATES, MUNICIPALITIES AND HEALTHCARE**

**Increase Medicaid funding for states and Stabilization Funds for Community Health Centers and critically related programs:** Dramatic public health steps are required urgently to prevent loss of life on a massive scale. The federal government must substantially increase Medicaid funding. Further, Congress must stabilize Community Health Centers, America's largest system of care.


## SUPPORTING OUR BUSINESSES

**FEDERAL FUNDS TO BUSINESS MUST REACH WORKERS:** Federal assistance to industry should be tied to conditions to help those most harmed by the crisis, rather than simply subsidizing financial markets or corporate profits. In 2008, the federal government provided hundreds-of-billions to Wall Street to respond to the financial crisis, with no-strings-attached to the relief. The results for Wall Street were tremendous – a quick return to profitability, large executive compensation packages, major stock buy-back programs, and more. Meanwhile, the results for working families were disappointing; many never completely recovered. Support for companies should be targeted and contingent on maintaining protections for workers.

Our mission at NETWORK is to advocate for the most vulnerable and marginalized members in our society—persons with preexisting conditions, people experiencing homelessness, people working low-wage jobs, incarcerated populations, communities of color, women and families living in poverty. These are precisely the people that will suffer the most in this growing pandemic. If ever there was a time to appreciate the common good, it is now.

Thank you for considering our views on this crucial legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "S. Simone Campbell, SSS". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sister Simone Campbell, SSS  
Executive Director  
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice