



**NETWORK Lobby Supports
The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (S.3548)**

March 25, 2020

United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator:

On behalf of our 100,000 supporters nationwide and in support of the common good, NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice urges you to **vote yes on S.3548, The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act**, immediately. We are pleased this bill includes many of NETWORK's recommendations and approves much needed funds for hospitals, state, and local governments; extends unemployment insurance for workers; and puts conditions on business assistance, in the interest of workers and the economic stabilization and financial security of their families. In short, this bill puts people first.

Catholic Social Justice calls us to prioritize the needs of the most vulnerable. Our mission at NETWORK is to advocate for the most vulnerable and marginalized members in our society, so that all can have access to the care they need to live healthy and dignified lives. People struggling in poverty – undocumented families, low-income workers, single parent families, the homeless, those housed in prisons or immigrant detention centers – have little ability to weather a health or economic crisis and require special care during this pandemic. If ever there was a time to uphold the Gospel call to feed the hungry, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, cure the sick, and care for the imprisoned, it is now.

PROTECTIONS FOR PEOPLE

This unprecedented health and economic crisis is growing exponentially more grave and perilous with each passing day. S.3548 takes necessary and critical steps to protect public health. First, the bill provides critical money to expand our healthcare system, which is not prepared to meet the needs of the COVID-19 outbreak. Investment in our hospitals, nursing homes, and community health centers is desperately needed to abate the pressure of increased demand for testing and treatment from the smallest town to the largest metropolis. Just as essentially, the bill provides support for our first responders who are working day and night, and at great risk to themselves. We are especially pleased this bill includes \$3.5 billion for the Child Care Development Block Grant to provide child care assistance to our first responders and emergency personnel.

S.3548 includes extending unemployment insurance for workers. Each day unprecedented numbers of workers are losing their jobs as the economy shuts down to protect public safety. This bill provides four months of protections for workers who lose their jobs, yet need assistance to pay their bills. We also pleased with the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance provision, which provides unemployment insurance to people who are not otherwise eligible for regular unemployment compensation, including the self-employed and those who have exhausted their

regular benefits. This is the protection our workers need. We also strongly support money provided for state and local governments. In order to address the pandemic, all levels of government must work together to keep our communities safe.

We are pleased that S. 3548 endeavors to keep families off the streets. The bill invests more than \$7 billion in affordable housing and homeless assistance programs. This includes a moratorium on evictions, foreclosures on federally-backed mortgages, and negative credit reporting through December 31, 2020. No worker or their family should be displaced from their homes or receive a negative mark on their credit during this time of unprecedented hardship.

PROTECTIONS FOR BUSINESS

This bill provides substantial assistance to the business community with over \$16 billion of benefits. S.3548 responsibly ties conditions to the aid to ensure it 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 of dollars to Wall Street to respond to the financial crisis with no strings attached. The results were tremendous for Wall Street, but did little to nothing for workers. This bill provides transparency to ensure taxpayer funds are protected and responsive to need by establishing an oversight authority to oversee loans to businesses. Additionally, it ties support to business with the retention of workers and critical worker protections. These guarantees will lead to a more robust recovery for workers, their families, and our whole economy.

FURTHER WORK NEEDED

We are in the midst of a pandemic that does not discriminate on a basis of wealth, race, or status. A key NETWORK priority excluded from this bill is worker and family protections for members of our immigrant communities. Every person living in our country must have access to testing, care, and assistance, regardless of immigration status. If people do not have access to health care, it endangers entire communities, while limited economic relief for only some participants of the economy stagnates the recovery of the nation. Immigrants make substantial contributions to our economy and must have access to the benefits without penalty or stigma. This COVID-19 economic stimulus package falls woefully short of protecting all families. Future legislation must remedy this. Congress must likewise commit to delivering necessary resources to protect people experiencing homelessness who face significant danger in this time of crisis and those who are incarcerated – in prisons or immigrant detention centers – and are at risk of deadly spread of this virus. Lives depend on it.

Congress must also increase the maximum food stamp allotment for individuals and households enrolled in SNAP in future legislation. This will prove critical for the food security of people struggling through this crisis. Ensuring that people get enough to eat will not only contribute to resilience of those most impacted by the crisis, but will also provide direct economic stimulus.

Finally, Congress must take steps to prepare our election infrastructure for the upcoming general election in November. States and local jurisdictions will need funding and clear guidance from Congress, as well as operational support from the Election Assistance Commission, to protect voters and ensure the right to vote in light of stay-at-home orders and social distancing requirements.

We look forward to working with you on the additional measures needed to respond to this crisis in a way that supports our moral obligation to protect the vulnerable.

Sincerely,

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

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