



NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE UNITED STATES SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL[®], INC.

September 21, 2021

Dear Senator/Representative:

As you continue deliberations on infrastructure and budget legislation, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul urges you to prioritize programs and policies that ensure poor and vulnerable families have access to stable housing, health care, and access to economic opportunity.

The National Council of the United States Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SVdP-USA) is a national network of close to 100,000 volunteers in over 4,400 communities, building a more just world through personal relationships with and service to people in need. Last year, Vincentian volunteers gave over \$1.4 billion in cash, in-kind, and volunteer services combined to over 4.4 million people, helping them find shelter or avoid eviction, find dignified work, feed their families, and thrive. Specifically, we believe Congress must prioritize:

Safe and Secure Housing: Stable housing--in the form of rent assistance or direct access to shelter--is the largest part of our ministry. We estimate, above and beyond millions in rent assistance, in 2020 we provided over \$80 million in housing programming. We commend Congress' previous investments in Emergency Rental Assistance; our efforts to help neighbors in need access these funds have been frustrated by confusion and administrative hurdles. We support any further efforts to get this critical assistance to those who face eviction, and we further urge funding for housing- and homelessness-related programs at the highest levels possible.

Healthcare: According to the Census Bureau's Supplemental Poverty Measure, medical out-of-pocket expenses are a significant driver of poverty for working families. Many of the families we serve would achieve financial security but for lack of decent healthcare. We support closing the Medicaid 'coverage gap' created by some states' failure to expand program eligibility as well as efforts to make healthcare more affordable.

Income Support for Working Families: Many of the people we serve are in working families, but their wages and unstable work schedules make it difficult to make ends meet. The Earned Income Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit, taken together, ameliorate poverty as well as promote work and family formation. Recent expansions of each have proved very effective at reducing rates of hunger and poverty, especially among children, and should be made permanent. We see the benefit to working families of the Child Tax Credit's monthly payment and encourage its extension as well.

This is not an exhaustive list of the many policies under consideration that may benefit poor and vulnerable families; however, they represent what our work tells us would help them meet their most urgent needs. Every day, Vincentians answer the call of our patron to "seek out the poorest and most abandoned of all." As Congress addresses the serious challenges in balancing needs and resources in this important legislation, we remind you that their voices and needs are often not considered in policy debates, yet our faith teaches us that they have a priority claim on resources. We encourage you to answer the same call.

Sincerely,

Ralph Middlecamp
National President

National Council of the United States Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Inc.

66 Progress Parkway • Maryland Heights, MO 63043-3706 • (314) 576-3993 • www.svdpusa.org