



United States Conference
of Catholic Bishops
Domestic Justice and
Human Development



CATHOLIC RURAL LIFE



Catholic
Charities
USA®



December 9, 2024

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Susan Collins
Vice Chair
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Murray, Vice Chair Collins, Chair Cole, and Ranking Member DeLauro:

On behalf of Catholic Charities USA (CCUSA), the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), the Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SVdP USA), and Catholic Rural Life, the undersigned urge Congress to approve the disaster supplemental funding request that President Biden submitted to Congress recently.

Throughout our country, the Catholic Church and its ministries have a long history of serving vulnerable people and communities through the provision of humanitarian assistance in multiple need areas, including disaster services. Hurricane Milton devastated Florida in early October with Category 3 winds just weeks after Hurricane Helene caused large-scale flooding and devastation in Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina.

Some of our coalition members contributed to the initial disaster response effort in the impacted areas. For instance, CCUSA coordinated the Catholic Church's response with its local agencies across six states, setting up distribution centers to get supplies to those most in need and beginning disaster case management to help families put their lives back together. Across the two storms, CCUSA raised millions of dollars in relief funds to serve those affected by the storms, and delivered in-kind donations in the form of water, solar lights, and other critical supplies. Likewise, the SVdP USA Disaster Services Corporation provided disaster case management services to 6,628 households across various programs in 2023 and 2024, valued at more than \$49 million. In Florida, they served 1,620 households and 3,974 individuals, including assistance for 500 families with gift cards, hygiene kits, and other commodities such as water and fuel cards, valued at more than \$8 million.

Notwithstanding the efforts by CCUSA, SVdP USA, and other nonprofit organizations, the reality is that without significant supplemental funding for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (DHS-FEMA) and other agencies, the effectiveness of disaster assistance to the affected populations will be limited. Short-term federal response funding for Helene and Milton is supported through FEMA's Disaster Relief Fund but, according to the White House, that does not cover needed costs for long-term recovery, including housing, agriculture losses, and certain transportation infrastructure.

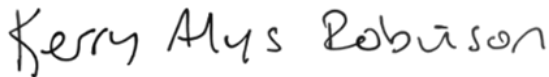
We appreciate the bipartisan interest expressed by the leadership in both chambers of Congress to aid those impacted by the recent disasters and catastrophic events. We urge Congress to pass a supplemental measure creating a robust disaster recovery fund to distribute much needed relief aid for the affected areas expeditiously, as requested by the White House in its supplemental funding request as follows:

- \$40 billion for the Department of Homeland Security to provide funding for FEMA's disaster relief fund, meant to address expected disaster costs through fiscal year 2025
- \$24 billion for the U.S. Department of Agriculture to provide help to farmers who experienced crop or livestock losses, aid with debris removal in impacted communities, repair rural infrastructure, and bolster grants for vital food and nutrition programs including the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)
- \$12 billion for the Department of Housing and Urban Development to help long-term disaster recovery efforts such as housing and economic revitalization
- \$8 billion for the Department of Transportation to rebuild infrastructure
- \$4 billion to the Environmental Protection Agency for water-system upgrades to mitigate future damages from natural disasters and for additional recovery work and
- \$3 billion for the Department of Health and Human Services to keep up life-affirming health care and support services in hurricane-hit areas.

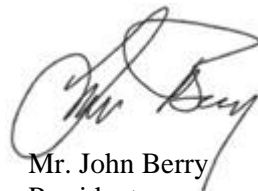
The large number of households affected by these recent disasters and previous ones throughout the nation, including wildfires and tornadoes, require expedited action from Congress to adequately supplement the resources available to relevant federal agencies.

We look forward to collaborating with Congress and federal and state agencies in providing much needed assistance to those impacted by natural disasters.

Sincerely yours,



Kerry Alys Robinson
President and CEO
Catholic Charities USA



Mr. John Berry
President
National Council of the United States
Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Inc.



Most Rev. Borys Gudziak
Archbishop of Ukrainian Catholic
Archeparchy of Philadelphia
Chairman, Committee on Domestic Justice
and Human Development
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops



Mr. James Ennis
Executive Director
Catholic Rural Life