



**Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development**  
**United States Conference of Catholic Bishops**

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March 23, 2010

The Honorable Blanche Lincoln  
Chairman  
Senate Committee on Agriculture,  
Nutrition and Forestry  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Saxby Chambliss  
Ranking Member  
Senate Committee on Agriculture  
Nutrition and Forestry  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Lincoln and Ranking Member Chambliss:

On behalf of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Catholic Charities USA, National Catholic Educational Association and National Catholic Rural Life Conference, we are encouraged by the release of the Chairman's mark, *Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010*, which includes important provisions that will be helpful in reducing hunger, particularly in the 17 million homes where children suffer the most from hunger because their families do not have sufficient food.

We want to acknowledge the committee's efforts identifying \$450 million per year in new funding, and urge the Committee to work with colleagues to get as close as possible to the President's request for \$1 billion per year. The current economic crisis and the rising rates of childhood hunger in the last few years signal a new moral urgency to provide the highest possible funding to commit fully to the President's goal of ending childhood hunger by 2015.

As you know, participation in federal assistance programs has remained at record levels over the last year. Catholic Charities agencies report seeing more families coming to food pantries as opposed to individual adults and seniors. In a recent survey, Catholic Charities agencies across the country reported an increase of 83% in the working poor seeking assistance, 70% more families seeking assistance, 51% more in the middle class seeking assistance, 66% increase in demand for SNAP (previously Food Stamps), and 53% increase in need for emergency financial assistance. These are indeed sobering numbers that highlight the growing challenge of serving individuals and families going hungry—many for the first time.

We express our support for provisions in the *Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010* that streamline program eligibility, promote greater access and expand outreach to ensure that children in our nation have access to the food they need for their healthy development. We ask that you do all you can to strengthen the Summer Food Service Program so that we can tackle the problem of only serving 3 million children during the summer months, out of 20 million children who are eligible for free and reduced price lunch during the school year. Start up grants and technical assistance for potential sponsors and feeding sites are cost-effective ways to provide community-based organizations and other partners the capacity to join the Administration's efforts to combat childhood hunger all year round.

In the 2009-2010 academic year, 50 percent of Catholic schools participated in the National School Breakfast and Lunch Programs, serving approximately 175,000 lunches and 88,000 breakfasts daily. We support updating the federal reimbursement rate for school meals, and technical and administrative improvements to streamline the enrollment process. We are pleased with the community eligibility provisions and incentives to improve the direct certification of students whose families are already eligible for TANF, SNAP and other federal programs with similar income eligibility guidelines. We support the Medicaid direct certification pilot and urge you to strengthen its scope to reach this already eligible population that remains underserved. The pilot ensures that eligible children are automatically enrolled, without additional paperwork from these families and school administrators.

Meeting the needs of so many families in need of basic nutrition is an important federal investment that also provides a stimulative effect for agriculture, for local businesses and for communities. As you make difficult choices in spending priorities, we urge you to make Child Nutrition reauthorization a priority and a moral imperative in federal efforts to combat poverty and hunger in this country.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bishop William F. Murphy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bishop William F. Murphy

Diocese of Rockville Center

Chairman, Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development

Letter to Chairman Lincoln and Ranking Member Chambliss

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Most Rev. Thomas J. Curry  
Auxiliary Bishop of Los Angeles  
Chairman, Committee on Catholic Education



Rev. Larry Snyder  
President  
Catholic Charities USA



Sr. Dale McDonald, PBVM, PhD  
Director of Public Policy  
National Catholic Educational Association



James Ennis  
Executive Director  
National Catholic Rural Life Conference

cc: Members of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry