



August 3, 2010

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Boehner
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senators Reid and Mc Connell and Representatives Pelosi and Boehner:

As a Catholic Coalition of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Catholic Charities USA, National Catholic Educational Association, and National Catholic Rural Life Conference, I write to urge you to bring the Child Nutrition Reauthorization bill to the floor.

The Child Nutrition Reauthorization provides an opportunity to strengthen the nutrition programs critical to the well-being of our nation's children, particularly the 17 million homes where children suffer the most from hunger because their families do not have sufficient food. 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 priority and funding to commit fully to the President's goal to ending childhood hunger by 2015.

As you know, participation in federal assistance programs has remained at record levels over the last year. In a recent survey, Catholic Charities agencies across the country reported an increase of 72% in the working poor seeking assistance, 75% more families seeking assistance, 61% more middle class seeking assistance, 56% increase in demand for food assistance, and 56% 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.

Child Nutrition programs provide millions of children with nutritious meals. For many children, these programs provide their only meals of the day. 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.

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 that reads "William F. Murphy".

Bishop William F. Murphy
Diocese of Rockville Center
Chairman, Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas J. Curry".

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

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fr. Larry Snyder".

Rev. Larry Snyder
President
Catholic Charities USA

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dale McDonald, PBVM".

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

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James F. Ennis".

James Ennis
Executive Director
National Catholic Rural Life Conference

Cc: Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman Blanche Lincoln
Senate Agriculture Committee Ranking Member Saxby Chambliss
House Education and Labor Committee Chairman George Miller
House Education and Labor Committee Ranking Member John Kline