



Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development

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February 9, 2012

The Honorable Dave Camp
Chairman
Committee on Ways and Means
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Max Baucus
Chairman
Committee on Finance
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Camp and Chairman Baucus:

As you continue negotiations on the Temporary Payroll Tax Cut Continuation Act, I urge you to do all you can to protect the economic security and dignity of unemployed and low-income workers and their families.

On behalf of the Catholic bishops, I urge you to **extend emergency unemployment insurance** in order that jobless workers and their families, who have suffered greatly in this economic downturn, can have a basic level of financial security as they seek stable, full-time employment. Furthermore, I wish to express **deep concern with and strong opposition to proposals to alter the Child Tax Credit** to now exclude children of hard working immigrant families.

The most recent drop in unemployment and growth in jobs was welcome news. However, this recent report highlighted that 23.8 million Americans are still unable to find full-time employment. The median length of joblessness is still ten months, and economists estimate that there are over four job seekers for every opening. The economy is still leaving too many people without work.

I would also caution against changing the unemployment insurance system in ways that could harm vulnerable workers, or make it more difficult for people to re-enter the workforce. Any changes must protect the lives and dignity of beneficiaries.

As Pope John Paul II said in his encyclical *On Human Work*:

The obligation to provide unemployment benefits, that is to say, the duty to make suitable grants indispensable for the subsistence of unemployed workers and their families, is a duty springing from the fundamental principle of the moral order in this sphere, namely the principle of the common use of goods or, to put it in another and still simpler way, the right to life and subsistence (No. 18).

The Bishops' conference has long supported the Child Tax Credit because it is pro-work, pro-family and one of the most effective antipoverty programs in our nation. In 2009, 2.3 million

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people, including 1.3 million children, were kept out of poverty by the Child Tax Credit. Proposals to deny the credit to children of working poor immigrant families--the large majority of whom are American citizens--would hurt vulnerable kids, increase poverty, and would not advance the common good. To exclude these children who are American citizens from the Child Tax Credit is unjust and wrong.

The Catholic bishops of the United States believe that the most effective way to build a just economy is the availability of decent work at decent wages. When the economy fails to generate sufficient jobs, there is a moral obligation to help protect the life and dignity of unemployed workers and their families. We also must protect those programs that help low-income workers escape poverty and raise their children in dignity.

I thank you for your service to our nation and I urge you to carefully consider the moral and human consequences of changes to the unemployment insurance program and low-income tax credits.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen E. Blaire". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Most Reverend Stephen E. Blaire
Chairman
Committee on Domestic Justice and Human
Development

Cc: Members of Congress