



Department of Social Development and World Peace

3211 FOURTH STREET NE • WASHINGTON DC 20017-1194 • FAX 202-541-3339
WEBSITE: WWW.USCCB.ORG/SDWP

January 17, 2007

Dear Senator,

On behalf of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, we urge you to give special attention to the needs of poor and vulnerable people both here and around the world as you consider the Continuing Resolution for FY2007 appropriations. We recognize that there are many priorities competing for your attention, but we wish to emphasize that the nation's spending decisions reflect not only policy choices but moral ones as well. When setting priorities, Congress should seek to advance the common good of all, which can not be achieved unless the essential needs of the poor and vulnerable are met.

Providing an adequate safety net for poor and vulnerable families at home and abroad and promoting human development in poor countries are both fundamental obligations of a responsible society. These must not be neglected as Congress addresses essential priorities such as homeland security and the defense of our nation, which can only be enhanced by wise investments to protect lives and reduce poverty and deprivation at home and abroad.

We are particularly concerned that the Continuing Resolution may cut back on **essential funding to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis** in poor countries. The United States has become a leader of a major international effort to address these devastating diseases. In spite of important gains achieved through this effort, however, HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis continue to wreak havoc on the lives and well-being of millions of people around the world, and their impact is most severe among the very poor. It would be tragic if the momentum that has been built up through United States leadership were lost through a failure to provide the necessary funds. We therefore urge Congress to approve the amount proposed by the Senate Appropriations Committee (\$4.36 billion), for morally appropriate HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis programs in FY2007.

Congress should also do all that it can to maximize the performance of two vital domestic housing programs: the public housing system that serves about one million poor households, mostly headed by an elderly or disabled person; and, the Section 8 voucher program that serves another 2 million very low income families. In the past few years, Congress has failed to fully fund the operation of the public housing system, leaving many local communities to increase rents for low income tenants, defer maintenance on an aging housing stock, and reduce important services to their residents. The Section 8 Rental Assistance Vouchers program, on the other

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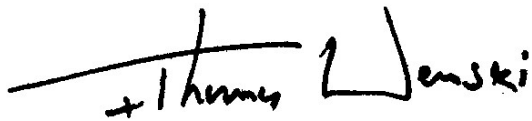
Page 2

hand, is not only short of money but has been hindered by HUD's implementation of the program resulting in some local housing needs going unmet. We believe Congress should approve the Senate Appropriations bill funding levels of \$3.6 billion for the operation of public housing and \$15.9 billion for the Section 8 program, as well as a new voucher distribution formula that would avoid the loss of more vouchers, to better serve the families struggling to meet their housing needs.

We also call on Congress to provide support for refugees and other vulnerable persons who flee persecution. Specifically, we request \$833 million for the Migration and Refugee Assistance account (MRA), \$55 million for the Emergency Refugee Migration Assistance (ERMA) account, and \$615 million for the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) in the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). These levels reflect the 2007 Administration request and have been included in the Senate appropriations measure.

As pastors and teachers, we are convinced that the fundamental moral measure of our nation's spending policy is whether it enhances or undermines those most in need. These are difficult times with few easy choices, but there are some right choices. In a time of war, mounting deficits, and growing needs, our nation's leaders must ensure that there are adequate resources to protect and enhance the lives and dignity of people who are poor and vulnerable both here at home and around the world.

Sincerely,



Bishop Thomas G. Wenski
Bishop of Orlando
Chairman
Committee on International Policy



Most Reverend Nicholas DiMarzio, Ph.D., D.D.
Bishop of Brooklyn
Chairman
Committee on Domestic Policy



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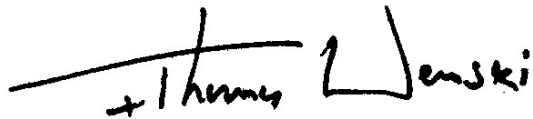
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