February 3, 2020

Representative Carolyn Maloney
Chairwoman
House Government Oversight Committee
2308 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Jim Jordan
Ranking Member
House Government Oversight Committee
2056 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Maloney and Ranking Member Jordan:

We, the undersigned faith-based organizations, representing millions of diverse people of faith across the United States, are writing to you in support of the four hearings taking place on February 5th and 6th regarding various proposed rules and regulatory changes that would negatively impact children across the country.

Over the past year, agencies across the administration have proposed damaging rules and regulations. The Office of Management and Budget’s (OMB’s) misguided proposal to replace the poverty measure from the Consumer Price Index (CPI) to a “Chained CPI” would, over time, expose millions of children to unnecessary hardship. By redefining the poverty line, this adjustment would force children to lose access to free or reduced school lunches and health coverage through Medicare or the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP). The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) recent proposed rule to redefine the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing requirements would allow communities to ignore essential racial desegregation obligations, further entrenching segregation and amplifying the cycle of poverty trapping many low-income families and children. The Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) proposed rule that would limit states’ usage of broad-based categorical eligibility would create more barriers for families to access much needed food assistance, therefore forcing 3.1 million people to lose Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programs (SNAP) benefits and put 982,000 children at risk of losing access to free school lunches. Finally, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) proposed rule to alter the Mercury and Air Toxics Standard would roll back mercury pollution standards, thereby exposing pregnant women and children to a potent neurotoxin emitted by coal and oil burning power plants that is particularly dangerous to their health.

What these proposed rules all have in common is a deleterious effect on our nation’s children. From putting food on the table and a roof over their heads to ensuring clean air and water, children look to us for guidance and security. When our federal government enacts regulatory changes like these, it is shirking its fundamental duty to protect God’s creation – especially the most vulnerable - and uphold the common good, which includes future generations. Most of the families affected by these proposed rules already struggle to make ends meet and provide for their children – the last thing our government should be doing is making their lives even harder.
When taken together, these proposed rules are striking examples of how the current administration has gone out of its way to implement policies that harm vulnerable children and their families. When taken into consideration with other proposed rules and regulatory changes this administration has considered and/or implemented, a clear pattern emerges. These actions and proposed actions appear to be part of a broader, systematic effort to undermine programs that help those who are struggling and need assistance. Any government action that forces vulnerable families to face increased hardship is unethical and a shameful reflection of our priorities as a nation.

As faith organizations, we believe that God dwells in each human soul, and that each person has the right to live with dignity and access to basic necessities in a safe and sustainable environment. The federal government has a moral obligation to help those in need of assistance and ensure that people have equal opportunity to live into their potential and contribute to their communities. We encourage these hearings as a meaningful form of oversight that will help hold our government accountable for its efforts to make life harder for families who are already struggling, thereby threatening the health and well-being of so many children.

Sincerely,

Alliance of Baptists
Center for Calling & Christian Leadership
Christian Reformed Church Office of Social Justice
Church World Service
Congregation of Our Lady of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces
Disciples Center for Public Witness
Disciples Refugee & Immigration Ministries
Faith in Public Life
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Franciscan Action Network
ICNA Council for Social Justice
Leadership Conference of Women Religious
MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger
Mt. Olive Lutheran Church, Dallas, TX
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Pax Christi USA
Poligon Education Fund
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A), Office of Public Witness
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, Mercy Justice Team
Union for Reform Judaism
United Church of Christ Justice and Witness Ministries
The United Methodist Church - General Board of Church and Society
Women of Reform Judaism