

January 17, 2024

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

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

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader Schumer, Minority Leader McConnell, Speaker Johnson and Minority Leader Jeffries:

We—the undersigned national faith-based organizations representing various religious organizations, denominations, and faith traditions—are united in our commitment to reduce hunger and improve nutrition for all. Despite our diverse beliefs and practices, we share fundamental values and teachings grounded in the scriptures that are the foundation of each of our faiths. Those scriptures instruct us to care for those among us in need and ensure that everyone may live with dignity. It is with this sense of responsibility that we urge you to provide full funding for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) to ensure that the program reaches all the low-income pregnant and postpartum participants, infants, and young children nationwide whose lives are bettered by this vital program.¹

For over 25 years, there has been a strong bipartisan commitment to fully fund this proven and effective program to provide health and nutrition support during critical stages of parental and childhood development. Increased participation and rising food costs have led to a funding shortfall below the proposed annual appropriations bills for FY24. If Congress fails to act and continues WIC’s current funding level for the rest of the fiscal year, it is estimated that approximately two million mothers and babies will be turned away from the program in 2024.² Nothing could be more antithetical to the beliefs of all faiths then abandoning vulnerable mothers and children.

We are outraged by the possibility of a first-ever funding shortfall for WIC during a time of increased and growing need. Without full funding, states will have to implement waiting lists and

¹<https://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/wic-program>

²<https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/about-2-million-parents-and-young-children-could-be-turned-away-from-wic>

turn eligible families away. It would stunt the health and growth of millions of young children, disproportionately harming Black, indigenous, and Hispanic expecting parents and little ones. This devastating situation would negatively impact young children at a pivotal time in their development, resulting in significant long-term costs to address exacerbated challenges to their health and well-being.

Across faith traditions, we are called to lift up the sanctity of every human being and ensure the opportunity to realize their full potential in life. Protecting these critical investments in our nation's young people is holy work and is clearly in the best interests of our nation. We know that the Divine is found in how we respond to the challenges facing our communities. We implore you to live up to the moral responsibilities that we all share, avert this looming crisis, and instill confidence that every low-income person who is eligible for WIC will be able to receive the full benefit.

We hope that we can count on your support and leadership on this critical issue. Thank you.

Sincerely,

MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger
Bread for the World

Avodah

Aytzim: Ecological Judaism

Catholic Charities USA

Church World Service

Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Franciscan Action Network

Interfaith Alliance

Islamic Relief USA

Jewish Council for Public Affairs

Missionary Oblates USP

National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd

National Council of Churches USA

National Council of Jewish Women

NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice

Network of Jewish Human Services Agencies

Pax Christi USA

Presbyterian Church USA Office of Public Witness

Rabbinical Assembly

Sojourners-SojoAction
The Episcopal Church
The Shalom Center
T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights
Union for Reform Judaism
Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice
Women of Reform Judaism

cc:

Chair Patty Murray, Senate Committee on Appropriations

Vice Chair Susan Collins, Senate Committee on Appropriations

Chairman Martin Heinrich, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies

Ranking Member John Hoeven, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies

Chairwoman Kay Granger, House Committee on Appropriations

Ranking Member Rosa DeLauro, House Committee on Appropriations

Chairman Andy Harris, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration

Ranking Member Sanford Bishop, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration