



Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development

3211 FOURTH STREET NE • WASHINGTON DC 20017-1194 • 202-541-3160

WEBSITE: WWW.USCCB.ORG/JPHD • FAX 202-541-3339

June 8, 2022

United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator/Representative:

In his encyclical on ecology, *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis spoke of “an urgent need to develop policies so that, in the next few years, the emission of carbon dioxide and other highly polluting gases can be drastically reduced, for example, substituting for fossil fuels and developing sources of renewable energy.”¹ On April 22, 2021, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) outlined a [moral framework](#) in furtherance of crafting just infrastructure policies, and we reiterated our [policy priorities](#) on September 7, 2021. This is a critical moment to pass climate legislation if the United States is to meet Paris Agreement emissions reduction goals, and I once again ask you to work toward policies that will help promote care for creation and those on the margins of society, respecting the rights and dignity of every human life. I ask for your consideration of the following:

Climate change mitigation, adaptation and innovation

Care for creation, and especially the climate which affects all life on earth, is integral to the care for humanity. The United States, a leading producer and consumer of global energy and one of the world’s top carbon emitters, has a distinct responsibility to address climate change.² This is a critical time for investments in climate mitigation, adaptation, and innovation. The inclusion of \$555 billion in climate investments proposed in the House-passed budget reconciliation bill was encouraging since those policies offer a comprehensive path to achieving net zero emissions.³

Climate policies must ensure secure and reliable decarbonized energy, reducing vulnerability to fluctuations in global fossil fuel markets. Immediate deployment of renewable energy technologies is among the most cost effective and impactful actions we can take.⁴ Incentives that encourage further technology research and development, carbon capture, energy storage, upgrading nuclear facilities and hydrogen fuels are also important. Additional investment in electric vehicles, and infrastructure for widespread electrification, remain essential for achieving net zero emission goals. The investment of \$320 billion in clean energy tax credits contemplated in the budget reconciliation bill, which will advance clean energy in all sectors, including manufacturing and industry, will spur rapid decarbonization.

As we move toward the rapid transition to a carbon-free future, other sectors must not be left behind. The \$20 billion dedicated to agricultural conservation investments and Rural Electric Cooperatives in the budget reconciliation bill are essential to spur agricultural decarbonization. Special attention must also be paid to the needs of coal and fossil fuel industry workers and their families, whose livelihoods face the uncertainties of

¹ *Laudato Si'*, no.26

² “Reducing greenhouse gases requires honesty, courage, and responsibility, above all on the part of those countries which are more powerful and pollute the most.” (*Laudato Si'*, no. 169)

³ Rajat Shrestha, Devashree Saha, John Feldmann, and Jillian Neuberger, “Achieving Net-zero Emissions: Can the Build Back Better Act Help Get There?” *World Resources Institute*, 15 December 2021. Online at <https://www.wri.org/insights/build-back-better-us-net-zero-emissions>.

⁴ IPCC, “Climate Change 2022: Mitigation of Climate Change. Summary for Policymakers,” Figure SPM.7, SPM-50. Online at https://report.ipcc.ch/ar6wg3/pdf/IPCC_AR6_WGIII_SummaryForPolicymakers.pdf#page=51.

energy transitions, as well as ensuring that disadvantaged communities receive benefits from climate and clean infrastructure.⁵ The \$105 billion investments in resilience, such as wildfire mitigation projects and forest preservation, as well as the focus on legacy pollution in communities that suffer disproportionately from the effects of climate change, reflect this integral ecology.

Investments today will determine the range of options, economic outcomes, and the well-being of human life and all of creation for years to come. As Pope Francis asks, so must we ask ourselves, “What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?”⁶

Raising revenues

Climate legislation is being discussed alongside changes to the tax code and prescription drug pricing reforms, policies that can offset the cost of investments. We have long advocated that “the tax system should raise adequate revenues to pay for the public needs of society, especially to meet the basic needs of the poor”⁷ and that “every person has a right to adequate health care”.⁸ The tax code should care for the poor⁹, promote family wellbeing¹⁰, be structured according to the principle of progressivity¹¹, raise adequate revenue for the common good, avoid encouraging cuts to poverty programs¹², and incentivize charitable giving and development.¹³ Any measures to address prescription drug pricing should ensure that medicines needed to maintain and promote good health are accessible and affordable to all.¹⁴

Other investments for the common good

As you consider further investments in support of the common good, please see our past letters advocating for policies that will help those on the margins of society, strengthen families, protect religious freedom, promote care for creation, and respect the rights and dignity of every human life:

- [Letter to Congress Concerning Legislation on Infrastructure, April 22, 2021](#)
- [Letter to Congress on Federal Budget Reconciliation, September 7, 2021](#)
- [Letter to the Committee on Energy and Commerce on Abortion Funding, September 12, 2021](#)
- [Letter to Congressional Leadership on Legalization of the Undocumented, September 23, 2021](#)
- [Letter to Congress on Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and the Build Back Better Act, November 3, 2021](#)
- [Letter to Congress on Child Tax Credit, May 19, 2022](#)

Sincerely,



Most Reverend Paul S. Coakley
Archbishop of Oklahoma City
Chairman, Committee on Domestic Justice
and Human Development

⁵ USCCB Letter to Congress Concerning Legislation on Infrastructure, April 22, 2021.

⁶ *Laudato Si'*, no. 160.

⁷ *Economic Justice for All*, no. 202.

⁸ *A Framework for Comprehensive Healthcare Reform*, no. 1.

⁹ *Economic Justice for All*, no. 202.

¹⁰ See Pope John Paul II's *Centesimus Annus*, no. 49 (1991) and Pope John Paul II's Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, no. 45.

¹¹ See Pope John Paul II's *Mater et Magistra*, no. 132, Pope Paul VI's *Populorum Progressio*, no. 47 and 84, and USCCB's document *Economic Justice for All*, no. 202.

¹² *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, no. 355, *Economic Justice for All*, no. 202.

¹³ See, Bishop Frank J. Dewane, “[Letters to Congress on Tax Reform, October 25, 2017](#),” United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

¹⁴ See [Health and Healthcare: A Pastoral Letter of the American Catholic Bishops](#).