



United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

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WEBSITE: WWW.USCCB.ORG

February 1, 2023

Dear Senator/Representative:

The start of this new 118th Congress presents both great opportunities and great challenges. As President of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), I write to urge your consideration of several key priorities of the Conference and to assure you of our prayers for your important work in service to our country.

When Pope Francis addressed Congress in 2015 during his apostolic visit to Washington, he reminded us that “[y]our own responsibility as members of Congress is to enable this country, by your legislative activity, to grow as a nation... You are called to defend and preserve the dignity of your fellow citizens in the tireless and demanding pursuit of the common good, for this is the chief aim of all politics... Legislative activity is always based on care for the people. To this you have been invited, called and convened by those who elected you.”

As Catholics and as pastors, the U.S. Bishops share in the responsibility of shaping public life and the moral character of society and have an obligation to contribute to greater justice, respect, and peace for all people and every human life. This responsibility, which includes advocacy with government officials, is a basic part of the mission we have received from Jesus Christ.¹ In furtherance of this mission, we urge your consideration of the following priorities:

Strengthen support for women, children, and families

The current moment presents an historic opportunity for us to continue efforts toward an authentically life-affirming society that honors the dignity of every human person throughout his or her life. We reiterate our call for lawmakers to place a high priority on policies that advance the health, safety, and flourishing of women; children (born and preborn); and families, including through a strengthened child tax credit, paid family leave, and stronger maternal and child healthcare.

Policies should be advanced to promote marriage and family life, which is the building block of any society and is central to socioeconomic outcomes. These include action to address serious threats to the wellbeing of families and individuals, such as violence, human trafficking, drug abuse, pornography, and gender ideology. Parents, as primary educators of their children, must have the freedom and resources to select the educational setting that best meets their children’s needs.²

We urge continued efforts to ensure that all children, born and preborn, are welcomed in love and protected in law.³ Further efforts are also needed to protect women from the harms of abortion, especially the dangerous expansion of chemical abortion.

¹ *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, no. 9.

² For policies that support the role of parents as the primary educators of their children, visit <https://www.usccb.org/offices/catholic-education/public-policy#tab--bishop-policy-statements-on-catholic-education>.

³ The USCCB supports a federal role in advancing gestational limits on abortion and other legislative efforts to protect preborn children and prevent subsidization of abortion. Further, in all the good work that the 118th Congress can accomplish in the areas addressed in this letter, we urge you in the strongest possible terms to never use policies or funds to facilitate the deliberate destruction of preborn life.

Address the needs of the poor and marginalized at home and abroad

We have a special responsibility to care for and promote the needs of the poor, the marginalized, and those most in need. To continue the building of a just and flourishing society, we urge a bipartisan reauthorization of the Farm Bill which includes robust assistance for those who are hungry in the United States and around the world.⁴ We ask you to continue to work for criminal justice reform, such as through the passage of the EQUAL Act⁵ and abolition of the death penalty⁶; initiatives to end racism and its effects; greater investments in mental health; and care for creation.

We are also mindful of the challenges that our brothers and sisters in the global community are facing, including urgent humanitarian needs, the continued war in Ukraine, ongoing conflict, and religious persecution. We call for robust international humanitarian and development assistance to help those in desperate need and ask that you work to address root causes of poverty and conflict and promote dialogue and peace.

A humane response to newcomers and a commitment to fixing our broken immigration system

Immigration is intrinsically linked to human life and dignity. As Bishop Mark Seitz of El Paso, chairman of the USCCB's Committee on Migration, recently stated, "When we speak about the issue of immigration, we are fundamentally addressing the movement of people—human persons created in the image and likeness of God, each one of them a brother or sister to us all." The bishops of the United States continue to affirm the natural right to migrate, balanced with the right of countries to maintain their borders.

With an increased number of families and individuals arriving at our border with Mexico, we have consistently called on federal authorities to provide critical infrastructure to meet their humanitarian needs and provide orderly and reliable processing. In reforming our immigration system, Congress should prioritize policies that promote integration, expand legal pathways, ensure family unity, and preserve due process protections for newcomers. Access to humanitarian protections, including asylum, must be preserved, and the root causes of migration must be addressed.⁷

Going forward together

Just as these priorities reflect the comprehensive vision of human flourishing and right reason that Catholic teaching provides, so does the Church's public ministry in these and other

⁴ The USCCB anticipates articulating further principles on Farm Bill renewal. The USCCB's advocacy from the 2018 renewal of the Farm Bill can be found on its website: <https://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/agriculture-nutrition-rural-issues/farm-bill#tab-- 018>.

⁵ See *USCCB Letter in Support of the Equal Act* (Aug. 1, 2022). <https://www.usccb.org/resources/Letter%20to%20Congress%20on%20the%20EQUAL%20Act.%20August%201.%202022.pdf>

⁶ See, *USCCB Letter in Support of Abolishing Federal Death Penalty* (Jan. 11, 2021). https://www.usccb.org/resources/2021-01-11-Capital%20Punishment-CIJP-Coakley-Pro-life-Naumann-Letter-Congress-Senate-House-Federal%20Death%20Penalty%20Prohibition%20Act_0.pdf

⁷ Consistent with these aims, bipartisan bills supported by the USCCB during the 117th Congress that should be taken up and passed by the 118th Congress include: Afghan Adjustment Act (H.R.8685/S. 4787); Farm Workforce Modernization Act (H.R.1603); American Dream and Promise Act (H.R. 6).

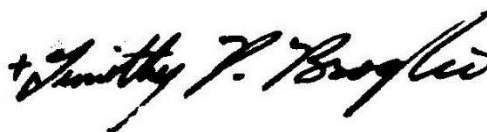
areas. In pursuing these just aims, Congress must allow religious organizations and individuals to bring the whole of their faith with them when they enter and serve in the public square.

Although this brief letter has not addressed every issue of concern, we hope this serves as a constructive resource and starting point. My brother bishops and I, and our staff at the Conference, including our policy and legal staff, are eager to be of assistance to you. I encourage you to be in touch with us through the USCCB's Office of Government Relations and to stay apprised of the Conference's advocacy letters and statements by signing up for our advocacy update newsletter.⁸

Finally, I beg all of you to consider first and foremost your mandate to serve the Nation and, together to look for avenues of collaboration that allow Congress to move forward and make decisions that serve the best interests of all.

Be assured of our prayers and gratitude for you and your staff as we go forward in pursuit of the common good.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Timothy P. Broglio". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

(The Most Reverend) Timothy P. Broglio
Archbishop for the Military Services, USA
President, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

⁸ The USCCB's Office of Government Relations offers a regular email update with the most recent statements, letters, and news related to the USCCB's advocacy priorities before Congress and the Administration. To sign up, click [here](#) or go to <https://www.votervoices.net/USCCB/Surveys/6712/Respond>.