



Catholic
Charities
USA.

Working to Reduce Poverty in America.

November 9, 2015

The Honorable John Hoeven
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Hoeven and Ranking Member Shaheen:

Episcopal Liaison
The Most Reverend
David A. Zubik, D.D.
Bishop of Pittsburgh

Chair
Marguerite Harmon

Vice Chair
Gregory Kepferle

Secretary
Elida El-Gawly

Treasurer
Charles Cornelio

President & CEO
Sr. Donna Markham OP, PhD

On behalf of the more than 160 member agencies of Catholic Charities USA (CCUSA), I write to urge and request your consideration to keep funding for the Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP) at \$120 million for fiscal years 2016 and 2017 in accordance with the Budget Act PL 113-235. CCUSA represents one of the largest faith-based social service networks in the country, operating more than 2,500 service sites in 54 states and territories spanning from Guam to Maine, and every day we hear the stories of those who rely on supportive programs to make ends meet.

Congress established the EFSP program in 1983, after the severe Recession of 1982. It is the first federal response to assist the newly unemployed and working poor from falling into chronic homelessness and food insecurity. EFSP funds are used to provide meals, lodging, rent/mortgage payments and essential utility payments for people facing emergency economic disasters.

The program is expansive in its reach. EFSP has served over 14,000 human services agencies in more than 2,500 communities across the country through a collaborative effort between the private and public sectors. We at CCUSA have been very proud to work and serve in administering the program with FEMA and our fellow National Board representatives: the American Red Cross, The Jewish Federation of North America, National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA, The Salvation Army and United Way Worldwide.

CCUSA regards EFSP as a model federal program, which we believe could serve as a template for revising and restructuring other programs impacting services to the poor and vulnerable in our communities. Based on our experience and the feedback we have received from our agencies, we believe that EFSP's success is tied to its practice of subsidiarity, meaning local agencies are responsible for decision-making within their communities. Over the years, EFSP has been assessed as a highly regarded and well run program by Congress, the Administration, providers and clients. It operates efficiently and effectively, with strong oversight and low administrative costs. Yet EFSP's allocation was severely



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cut by 40% beginning in fiscal year 2011 (from \$200 million to \$120 million). The cut resulted in 500 fewer jurisdictions and 2,800 fewer human services agencies being able to participate in the program. Presently the Senate Homeland Security Committee seeks to reduce funding by \$20 million which is an overall 17% program reduction.

The cut is not justified. In May 2007, just prior to the 2007-2009 “Great Recession”, the number of unemployed persons was 6.8 million, the number of involuntary part-time workers was 4.5 million and the number of job seekers who had not looked for work in May (and therefore were not counted as unemployed) was 1.4 million. In May 2015, post-recession, the number of unemployed was 8.7 million, the number of involuntary part-time workers was 6.7 million, and the number of job seekers who had not looked for work during the month (and therefore were not counted as unemployed) was 1.9 million. In every demonstrable category, the employment situation was significantly worse in May 2015. Yet, Congress allocated more than \$151 million to EFSP in fiscal year 2007, and is considering cutting the program to \$100 million in fiscal year 2016. If the proposed \$20 million cut is adopted, then—when adjusted for inflation—it would be the lowest allocation in EFSP’s history, and would result in the provision of 10.8 million fewer meals, 730 thousand fewer nights of lodging, 9 thousand fewer rent/mortgage assistance payments, and 27 thousand fewer utility payments in fiscal year 2016.

As America’s unemployed and working poor continue to be challenged by the economy, we respectfully urge Congress to fund the EFSP program at the flat level of \$120 million in FY 2016.

Sincerely,



Brian Corbin