

## A FAITHFUL BUDGET PAID FOR

### **Introduction:**

A Faithful Budget will address how investments in a shared future can be accomplished in a fiscally responsible way. We cannot leave our children a legacy of debt, but neither must we leave them a legacy of rising poverty and growing inequality. Throughout this document, we have identified our priorities for reasonable spending reductions to help fund vital programs. In particular, these reductions can be found in “Investing in Human Rights and True Human Security.” Additionally, we note that an emphasis on job creation and economic revitalization will generate new revenues and reduce families’ immediate need to rely on social safety net programs. Finally, we believe that resources can be found in a fair and just tax system.

### **Grounded in Just Taxation:**

This Faithful Budget reinstates a just tax system, including investment in the renewal of the nation’s economic wellbeing and protection of the poor and vulnerable, which will itself serve to reduce the long-term deficit. Such investment should be financed through a tax system founded on fairness and shared commitment, where those who have reaped extraordinary benefits contribute proportionately to the good of all.

### **A Faithful Budget will call for a federal tax code that:**

- Raises adequate revenues to meet societal needs while supporting a strong economy and job creation.
- Calls for shared responsibility among individuals and corporations to take care of our needs and priorities.
- Provides adequate income assistance and related services to working families and individuals.
- Strengthens and expands refundable tax credits and tax programs that support low-income working parents and individuals.
- Provides incentives to pursue and maintain employment and increase earnings.
- Strengthens and expands programs that support workers’ efforts to develop their human capital, invest in their financial security, and achieve self-sufficiency.
- Eliminates wasteful and inefficient tax loopholes and tax expenditures in the individual and corporate tax codes.
- Efficiently uses funding so as to promote intergenerational responsibility.
- Works simply and practicably so that taxpayers, tax administrators, and legislators can all understand the rules and confidently apply them or comply with them.

## A FAITHFUL BUDGET FOR DOMESTIC HUMAN NEEDS

### A. Introduction:

A Faithful Budget promotes social and environmental sustainability, ensuring a livable world for generations to come. Our indigenous ancestors expressed that decisions ought to be made keeping in mind their long-term effects—even to the seventh generation. We encourage our national leaders to consider decisions of revenue and spending in the context of how they will benefit our children's children as well as how they impact our own lives.

We face deep divisions in our country. People are frustrated with the current situation, anxious about their family's futures. Too many families are struggling to make ends meet and too few jobs provide sufficient wages for parents to provide for their children. Yet, rather than coming together for the betterment of our nation, incivility and intolerance appear on the rise. A Faithful Budget will advance and invest in a vision of this country that we know it can be, a country where all enjoy opportunity and financial security, a country where everyone can live with dignity, provide for their family, and contribute to their community.

### Reflecting the Need:

- In 2015, 13.5 percent of the U.S. population, and 21 percent of all children, lived below the federal poverty line (\$24,036 for a family of four).<sup>1</sup>
- Most Americans (51.4%) will live in poverty at some point before age 65.<sup>2</sup>
- In most areas, a family of four needs to earn 200 percent of the federal poverty line in order to provide children with basic necessities. In 2015, close to 1 in 3 people and more than 41 percent of children did not attain this income level.<sup>2</sup>
- As we reflect on our needs as a nation, we must consider the inequalities which exist across groups. For example, in 2015, African-Americans (24.1%), Hispanics (21.4%), and single female householders (28.2%) were more than twice as likely as the white population (9.1%) to live below the poverty threshold.<sup>3</sup> This places greater burden on these families to care for their children or other dependent members. They are at greater risk of food insecurity, homelessness, and untreated health concerns, pushing them to rely more heavily on the social safety net.

A Faithful Budget must invest in a social safety net and avenues for economic mobility and opportunity. It must provide the essential needs of our communities, ensuring safe and healthy development of families and individuals into the future, and supporting those who are most vulnerable due to unemployment, sickness, and old age, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, or religious or sexual orientation. Many programs supporting health and public safety have been devastated in recent years, and austere budget caps and sequestration cuts threaten them further. The budget elements described below would shift the direction, taking steps toward positive development where people and communities have greater opportunity and ability to flourish and thrive.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Community Population Survey, 2016, available at <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2016/demo/income-poverty/p60-256.html>.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Community Population Survey, 2016, available at <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2016/demo/income-poverty/p60-256.html>.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

## **B. Economic Security and Mobility**

Two general strategies bring about greater economic security, opportunity, and fairness within the United States. The first is to ensure all individuals, families, and communities can access resources allowing them to contribute their time, treasure, and talents for the betterment of their family, community, and society. The other is to ensure that when members do fall into hard times, there is a strong safety net to allow them to continue to live in dignity.

The federal budget assists with the both strategies through programs that provide economic security and mobility, asset building, education, basic assistance, and meaningful employment.

### **1. Creating Mobility through Tax Credits**

A Faithful Budget does more than simply meet the needs of poor and vulnerable people. A Faithful Budget simultaneously promotes economic opportunity, mobility, and security. Refundable tax credits for low-income working families are some of the most effective anti-poverty programs in the country. In 2015, the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Child Tax Credit lifted 9.8 million people out of poverty, including 5.1 million children. These two tax credits combined kept 31.8 million people from falling into, or deeper into, poverty, including 13.2 million children. Moreover, these tax credits reward work because the benefits increase with earnings. The EITC and Child Tax Credit also promote economic mobility. A majority of beneficiaries only receive the EITC for one or two years before moving on to higher income levels. Research shows these credits have long-term benefits for children as well. Kids in households receiving these refundable tax credits are more likely to have better health, more schooling, more hours worked, and higher earnings in adulthood. Finally, these credits help grow the economy, as recipients spend their benefits quickly and in their local communities. Every \$1 of refundable tax credits generates about \$1.26 in economic growth.

This Faithful Budget proposes to strengthen refundable tax credits so they can effectively lift more individuals out of poverty and build a broader, more stable middle class. This budget:

- Fixes the glaring gap in the EITC for adults not raising children, the lone population still taxed into or deeper into poverty.
- Lowers the income threshold of the Child Tax Credit down to zero so working families can count every dollar they earn towards the credit.
- Expands the maximum Child Tax Credit to \$3,000 per child for very low-income families with young children under the age of six, as those families are most likely suffer from higher poverty and the effects are particularly lasting for young children.
- Increases funding for Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites so that low-income individuals can claim their tax credits without paying expensive and excessive fees to professional tax preparers.

### **2. Education**

Education is a universal human right. However time and time again, we witness this right being denied to the most vulnerable children in America – namely low income students, students of color, and students with disabilities. It is our duty as a nation that calls for justice and equality for

all, to ensure that the children who are so often left to fall through the cracks, have a safe place to land.

### **Federal Education Programs**

Quality education plays a pivotal role in determining a successful career. In order to ensure that all students are given the opportunity to participate in the national job market, investing in key education programs for early education through higher education must remain a priority:

- **Title I** is the biggest k-12 federal education program supporting high poverty public schools. This program is absolutely critical. While nearly 50 million<sup>4</sup> children are educated in public schools, these schools are not equal. The neighborhood a school resides determines the quality of education that students will have access to. While public schools in wealthy districts are thriving, schools in poorer districts are in dire need of renovation<sup>5</sup>. Due to redlining policies that sanctioned people of color into deprived neighborhoods and nudged white families into wealthier suburbs; students of color typically end up attending the schools that lack resources<sup>6</sup>. Due to this, Title I is a program that cannot be comprised. Counselors, psychologists, laptops, up to date text books, and tutors should not be things that only wealthy students have access to. In order to address both wealth and racial inequalities that manifest in this nation, we must prioritize placing funds into schools that are quite literally, falling apart.
- **After School Programs** are also extremely essential to children, especially low income children of color. Not everyone can afford childcare or private tutors. After school programs ensure that children are in a safe and stimulating place to spend the early evening while their parents work. In addition, after school programs provide children with enriching activities that actually boost their educational performance, their social skills, their engagement, their self-esteem, and their motivation to learn<sup>7</sup>.
- **Head Start** is a necessity for many low-income children and families as it eliminates cost barriers to childhood education, provides comprehensive health and developmental services, and increases parent involvement in their children's lives. As a result, Head Start graduates are more likely to complete high school and obtain a college degree. This program has done wonders to reduce inequities between low income and high income families<sup>8</sup>.
- **The Disabilities Education Act** ensures that public schools serve the education needs of students with disabilities. Today, 6.5 million children receive special education services due to the Disabilities Education Act<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=372>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2016/08/property-taxes-and-unequal-schools/497333/>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.epi.org/publication/the-racial-achievement-gap-segregated-schools-and-segregated-neighborhoods-a-constitutional-insult/>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.childrensaidsociety.org/files/upload-docs/Community%20Schools%20-%20After%20School%20Programs.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.diversitydatakids.org/data/policy/1/head-start>

<sup>9</sup> <http://idea.ed.gov/>

- **The Federal Pell Grant** is the largest source of grants for college students. The award given depends on financial need. The program has played a pivotal role in reducing barriers to higher education for low income students.
- **Title IX** prohibits the discrimination in schools on the basis of sex and gender. Such a program must remain intact in order to ensure that all students' civil rights are maintained.

With proposed cuts to the Department of Education, such vital programs are at risk. The federal government should take an active role in continuing to fund programs which aim to bring greater equity, protecting the most vulnerable. We must ensure that all people have access to educational opportunities. Today, there are many challenges impacting the quality of education our nation's students receive. At a time when education funding is being drastically reduced, we must keep in mind the cornerstone role education plays in personal success, innovation, and the economy.

#### **A Faithful Budget will:**

- **Fully fund Title I** in order to invest in the repair, renovation, and modernization of public school facilities, particularly in low-income neighborhoods, in order to reduce institutional racial wealth gaps.
- **Increase investment in Afterschool programs** which are an essential developmental tool for low income students and students of color.
- **Continue to invest in Head Start** and other early childhood education programs offering our children the best opportunity for future success.
- **Preserve funding the Disabilities Education Act** to protect students with disabilities.
- **Continue to fund the Federal Pell Grant Program** and others like it, in order to ensure that low income students have access higher education.
- **Maintain Title IX** to prevent any discrimination bases on sex and gender.

#### **4. Worker Supports and Protections**

Work is more than a means to making a living. Work offers the opportunity for individuals to use their gifts, talents, and education to contribute to the common good. All working people, regardless of their jobs and occupations deserve dignity and respect. Work should enhance a person's humanity in a safe and dignified environment.

Yet, every year more than 3 million working people are seriously injured, and thousands more are killed on the job<sup>10</sup>. The financial and social impacts of these deaths and injuries on working people, on their families, and on their communities cannot be overstated. Often, these deaths and injuries can be avoided with adequate training and jobsite inspections.

When injuries or illnesses happen, all working people rely on assistance that allows them to remain in the workforce while caring for family members. Working people in low-wage industries and those with

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/osh.pdf>

limited support structures are forced to make impossible decisions between working to put food on the table for their families and actually spending time with their loved ones. Having a new child, experiencing an illness, or needing to take care of a sick relative are instances when working people need additional support, but few receive the help they need and deserve. Currently, just 10.6% of families eligible for child-care subsidies receive them, leaving parents with limited options and putting children in perilous circumstances.<sup>11</sup> Only 14% of working people have access to paid family leave, and this access is even less common for working people in low-income industries<sup>12</sup>. 80% of the working people in industries that pay the lowest wages have no access to paid sick days<sup>13</sup>. This is not only an affront to the basic human rights that all working people deserve, but a public health crisis<sup>14</sup>. Working people also struggle with unpredictable work hours that make it hard to plan for family needs and maintain employment.

As the economy continues to evolve and industries change more and more working people will find themselves laid off and without a means to support their families. Having access to localized job training programs is important in assisting laid-off workers in finding new employment in different industries.

Whether working in a job for years or applying for a new position, nobody should face discrimination. The federal budget should include adequate financial resources to oversee the employment practices of federal contractors to ensure that they are providing equal employment opportunities and respond to and seek remedy for complaints of discrimination in all workplaces.

Finally, low-wage jobs make it impossible for working people to keep up with rising costs of living. In no state does the minimum wage meet the living wage, meaning that working people with full-time jobs making the minimum wage still cannot afford even basic necessities<sup>15</sup>. This problem is compounded by the alarming rate of wage theft, which is estimated to cost working people in the United States up to \$50 billion a year in earned pay<sup>16</sup>.

#### **A Faithful Budget will:**

- Provide adequate funding for Occupational Safety and Health Administration inspectors in order to ensure that workplaces across the country are safe.
- Fund educational grant opportunities for worker health and safety that will reach the most

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<sup>11</sup> [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/powerpost/wp/2017/01/05/children-parents-u-s-suffer-because-quality-affordabe-child-care-is-lacking/?utm\\_term=.d6cb92db7f10](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/powerpost/wp/2017/01/05/children-parents-u-s-suffer-because-quality-affordabe-child-care-is-lacking/?utm_term=.d6cb92db7f10)

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/issues/work-family/paid-leave.html>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.paid sick days.org/about-us/?referrer=https://www.google.com/#.WR9Kvmjvcs>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2015/10/19/449213511/survey-half-of-food-workers-go-to-work-sick-because-they-have-to>

<sup>15</sup> <http://livingwage.mit.edu/>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.epi.org/publication/epidemic-wage-theft-costing-workers-hundreds/>

difficult to reach members of the workforce.

- Invest in and increase access to affordable childcare, offer comprehensive paid family leave and paid sick days that recognize the needs of working people in the 21st century.
- Increase forms of transportation assistance, such as public subsidies for transportation expenses and investments in reliable, safe public transit systems.
- Prioritize educational grants, which match instructional programs with areas of high need.
- Adequately fund the Office for Federal Contract Compliance Programs and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in order for them to allow them to pursue their complementary but different missions successfully.
- Ensure that the Department of Labor has adequate funding to combat the many nefarious methods in which wages are stolen from workers across the country.

### **C. A Strong Safety Net**

A strong safety net is necessary to support members of our communities during times they are struggling to meet basic needs, allowing them and their families to live in dignity.

#### **1. Housing**

Living in dignity demands a safe and secure place in which to live. According to the 2016 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress, approximately 549,928 people in the U.S. are homeless on any given night, a decrease of 3% from January 2015 to January 2016. Much homelessness is due to insufficient housing stock for those households with the lowest income.<sup>17</sup> Religious communities have a deep moral understanding to end homelessness, a consistent calling found in nearly every faith tradition. As the numbers show, they are working tirelessly across the country to that end. Places of worship and faith based community organizations offered over 150,000 units of housing for single adults on a single given night in 2016.<sup>18</sup> But lack of affordable housing in communities is making it difficult to put an end to homelessness—particularly in helping people living with the lowest incomes.

##### **a. Affordable Housing**

Demand for rental housing is increasing due, in part, to two significant new challenges in the affordable rental market. Low-wage workers struggle to find affordable rentals, and stagnant wages exacerbates the need for additional units affordable to very-low-income and extremely low-income households. The shortage of affordable rental homes impacts the extremely low-income (ELI) level in which household income is at or below either the poverty guidelines or 30% the area median income. ELI renter households, 11.4 million, accounted for 26% of all U.S. renter households and nearly 10% of all households.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> “2016 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress,” November 2016, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2016-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> “Faith Based Organizations: Fundamental Partners in Ending Homelessness,” May 2017, National Alliance to End Homelessness [http://www.endhomelessness.org/page/-/files/05-04-2017\\_Faith-Based.pdf](http://www.endhomelessness.org/page/-/files/05-04-2017_Faith-Based.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> “The Gap: A Shortage of Affordable Homes” March 2017, National Low Income Housing Coalition [http://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/Gap-Report\\_2017\\_interactive.pdf](http://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/Gap-Report_2017_interactive.pdf)

An effective tool to end homelessness and ensure affordable housing opportunities is through the use of the Housing Choice Voucher program, that helps over 5 million people in 2.2 million households nationwide. It is a rental assistance program that serves communities of all sizes, allows for mobility, prevents homelessness, and boosts affordable housing. Primarily, the households using Housing Choice Vouchers in the United States includes 88 % with children, people who are elderly, or people who are disabled. In 2016, less than one in four households, eligible for any form of federal housing assistance received it due to a lack of funding.<sup>20</sup> In Fiscal Year 2017 budget funded \$18.36 billion to renew 97% of Housing Choice Vouchers leaving tens of thousands fewer families able to use vouchers due to renewal funding shortfalls.

NUMBER (IN MILLIONS) OF RENTER HOUSEHOLDS AND NUMBER OF AFFORDABLE UNITS BY INCOME LEVEL IN 2010 AS COMPARED TO 2015<sup>21</sup>

Income Level as % of AMI	2010			2015		
	<30%	<50%	<80%	<30%	<50%	<80%
# of Rental Households	10.11	17.37	25.66	11.4	17.9	26.8
# of Affordable Units	5.5	14.9	33.9	7.5	15.5	34.9
Surplus (Deficit) of affordable units	(4.56)	(2.47)	8.24	(3.9)	(2.4)	8.1

In the period of 2010 – 2017, government resources and attention have focused on homeownership and foreclosure prevention, neglecting the needs of renters. Funding levels have cut assistance to low- to extremely-low income households, eliminating some programs.

HOUSING PROGRAM FUNDING - BUDGET CHART (FIGURES IN \$ MILLIONS)<sup>22</sup>

Program	FY2010 enacted	FY2017 enacted
Tenant Protection Vouchers	120.0	110.0
Public Housing Capital Fund and Operating Funds	7,275.0	1,942.0
Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS	335.0	356.0
Housing for Elderly (Sect. 202)	825.0	502.0
Housing for Persons with Disabilities (Sect. 811)	300.0	146.0
Veterans Affairs Supportive	75.0	40.0

<sup>20</sup> "FY 2016 Appropriations: Housing Choice Voucher Program," July 2015, National Alliance to End Homelessness [www.endhomelessness.org/page/-/files/FY%202016%20-%20S8%20Overview.pdf](http://www.endhomelessness.org/page/-/files/FY%202016%20-%20S8%20Overview.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> National Low-Income Housing Coalition, NLIHC Tabulations of 2011 ACS PUMS, combined with 2010 data.

<sup>22</sup> National Low-Income Housing Coalition (excerpted from FY13 Budget Chart and FY17 Budget Chart), [http://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/FY13\\_Budget\\_Chart.pdf](http://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/FY13_Budget_Chart.pdf), [http://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/NLIHC\\_HUD-USDA\\_Budget-Chart.pdf](http://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/NLIHC_HUD-USDA_Budget-Chart.pdf)

Housing		
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Affordable housing stock is being lost due to upper-income households moving back to the heart of the city and the rapid increase in construction of office space in the same areas. Replacement vouchers for those displaced by this trend are increasingly available only for outlying areas, adding transportation cost and time to the difficulties faced by those in poverty. This overpowering of one group by those more powerful is in opposition to a sense of solidarity, a value to faith groups.

**b. Home Energy Assistance**

In order for a home to be safe and allow a family to live in comfort, there must be access to sufficient heat and cooling, the ability to preserve and prepare food, and sufficient energy to operate necessary appliances. The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) serves a critical, life-saving role that protects millions of families from America’s cold winters and hot summers. LIHEAP helps the most vulnerable individuals, including seniors, veterans, many living on fixed incomes, families with young children, and those with disabilities. According to the Department of Health and Human Services, more than 70% of LIHEAP recipient households had at least one vulnerable person – a senior age 60 or older, a child age 5 and under, or an individual with a disability.<sup>23</sup>

LIHEAP is not an entitlement and does not receive increased funding as need increases. For example, in FY 2015, an estimated 6.0 million households received assistance with heating costs through LIHEAP, yet LIHEAP has seen its budget take large and drastic cuts in recent years. Between FY 2009 and FY 2015, LIHEAP’s appropriation was cut by more than one-third, down to \$3.9 billion.<sup>24</sup> Due to these reductions in funding, states have been forced to reduce the number of households served, cut benefits, or both. These reductions place people in dangerous situations, having to choose between heat and food during the bitter cold winters, or between air conditioning and medicine during the dangerously hot and humid summers. The struggle to support a home with rising rents and energy costs frequently places families at risk of not being able to meet other needs, such as health care or sufficient nutrition to keep all members healthy.

**c. Preventing and Addressing Homelessness**

In addition to the lack of affordable housing and rising home energy costs, the plague of homelessness continues to cause severe hardship, leaving millions of individuals and families without a place to call “home.” Fortunately, with the coordinated efforts of the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness our nation’s homeless population has received somewhat

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<sup>23</sup> “Trump budget proposes to eliminate LIHEAP,” March 2017, National Energy and Utility Affordability Coalition <http://neuac.org/news-room/press-releases/neuac-statement-proposed-trump-budget/>

<sup>24</sup> “LIHEAP needs at least \$4.7 billion in FY16,” National Energy and Utility Affordability Coalition <http://www.neuac.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/LAD-2015-National-Sheet-STATISTICS.pdf>

greater attention in the past few years, decreasing by 15% (approx. 97,330 people) between 2007 and 2016.<sup>25</sup> According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness:

Faith-based organizations serve as the backbone of the emergency shelter system in this country – operating at a minimum nearly 30 percent of emergency shelter beds for families and single adults at the national level. They play a critical role in delivering services to people in crisis and significantly fewer households experiencing homelessness would be served and more would remain in crisis without them. Homelessness will not be ended without faith-based organizations.<sup>26</sup>

Low incomes, high housing costs, and a lack of supportive services often make people vulnerable to homelessness. Prevention and rapid re-housing clearly work -- this is the lesson of the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program which appears to have forestalled an increase in homelessness despite lack of affordable housing. Permanent supportive housing works to house chronically homeless people and veterans with disabilities, and continued investment will solve these problems.

**d. Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) and Disaster Relief**

The Community Development Block Grant program (CDBG), first established under the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, is one of the most critical U.S. domestic programs that helps redevelop housing through loan assistance and fostering development for communities across the country. The majority of CDBG funds, a minimum of 70%, go to areas of low and moderate incomes, and are valuable to places of worship working to revitalize marginalized neighborhoods.

Beyond serving the vital needs of rehabilitating public facilities—such as rebuilding shelters, providing community services like job training, or offering down payment assistance for first home buyers—the CDBG program has been used in recent years to help localities rebuild in the aftermath of terrible disasters. The faith community has deep history of service in disaster response, and continues to offer immediate relief for recovering communities. In the midst of largescale natural disasters across the country, such as destructive hurricanes along the east

*They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain—*

*Isaiah 65:21-23a (NRSV)*

<sup>25</sup> “2016 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress,” November 2016, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2016-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> “Faith Based Organizations: Fundamental Partners in Ending Homelessness,” May 2017, National Alliance to End Homelessness <http://www.endhomelessness.org/library/entry/faith-based-organizations-fundamental-partners-in-ending-homelessness>

coast, or flooding in Louisiana and across the Midwest, CDBG Disaster Relief grants have been essential in both the short-term and long-term responses in helping struggling communities.

Unfortunately, programs like the CDBG program are often the first to be considered for funding cuts—many times because the effects of rollbacks are not always immediately evident. However, the faith-based community recognizes the integral value revitalizing assistance. Churches, synagogues and mosques alike all understand firsthand that such programs are essential to cutting back on blight, and offering much needed assistance for people living in poverty. As such, religious groups firmly recommend continuing to fully fund of the CDBG program.

**e. National Housing Trust Fund (HTF)**

According to: *The GAP: A Shortage of Affordable Homes*, published by the National Low-Income Housing Coalition (3.2.17), only 35 units exist for every 100 needed. The Housing Trust Fund (HTF) is the first new housing production program for those at the extremely-low-income (ELI) level; at or below 30% of the Area Median Income (AMI).

The National Housing Trust Fund, authorized in July 2008, allocates funding to states to make available and operate additional affordable housing for those in greatest need. 90% of the HTF dollars must go to low income households of which 75% must be used to serve ELI households. Up to 10% may be used to support first-time homeownership.

In 2016, the first HTF dollars were allocated to states, according to a formula, as the state's NHTF Allocation Plan was approved and funding was available. There is no cost to the Federal Government, as the NHTF is not a part of the appropriations system. The initial source of funding is a small fee (0.042%) on Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae activity – 65% of which goes to the trust fund. Most housing produced by through the HTF is part of larger projects, often a portion of units within mixed income complexes. Additional funding may come through housing finance reform. There are current proposals for a one-time infusion of significant funding, interest of which would be used, and for funding from restructuring of the Mortgage Interest Deduction.

**f. Renter Tax Credit**

More than 75% of federal housing assistance goes to home ownership, and the bulk goes to the wealthiest 20% of households. Yet, low-income renters are far more likely to spend a higher percent of their income on housing. Rental assistance programs reach only one in four eligible households. A Renters' Tax Credit would help balance housing policy. There is not a federal Renters' Tax Credit, however legislation is being considered. There are seven states and a few cities (including Washington, D.C.) that have such a credit.

A Renters' Tax Credit should work in tandem with the Low-income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) – a subsidy for affordable housing development. The LIHTC is not sufficient to push rents low

enough for low-income households to afford. In tandem, these tax credits would support struggling families and would be a win-win for renters and property owners. Renters would pay no more than 30% of their income for rent, property owners would receive a tax credit in exchange.

The renters' credit would be administered by states and implemented through a public/private partnership.

**g. Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC)**

The Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) is the primary program to encourage property owners to invest private equity in the development of affordable rental housing for low-income households. Since its inception in 1986 it has helped finance more than 2.4 million affordable rental-housing units for low-income households. The LIHTC subsidizes investors who claim tax credits on their federal income tax returns. The credits can be used for new construction or for significantly rehabilitated properties affordable to low-income households.

A project must set aside 40% of the units for renters earning no more than 60% of the area median income (AMI), or 20 % for renters earning 50% or less of the AMI. Once a property is operational, the tax credit is claimed annually over a 10-year period, it must comply with low-income housing rules for 15 years, and must remain affordable for 30 years.<sup>27</sup>

**A Faithful Budget will:**

- Provide additional units of housing affordable to very-low- and extremely low-income households by funding the already authorized National Housing Trust Fund.
- Ensure sufficient vouchers for all households to have access to safe and affordable living space.
- Fund the LIHEAP program at no less than the FY2017 level and increase access to energy assistance for low-income families and veterans.
- Continue to invest in the successful Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re- Housing Program.
- Invest in improving our crisis response system to better respond to the emergency needs of unsheltered families and individuals.
- Provide funding for permanent supportive housing to chronically homeless people, homeless veterans, and homeless people with disabilities.

**2. Domestic Hunger and Nutrition**

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<sup>27</sup> Low-Income Housing Tax Credits: Affordable Housing Investment Opportunities for Banks," April 2014, Office of the Comptroller of Currency <https://www.occ.gov/topics/community-affairs/publications/insights/insights-low-income-housing-tax-credits.pdf>

Hunger and food insecurity costs the U.S. economy at least \$160 billion in poor health outcomes and additional health care every year. More than 42 million Americans, including 1 in 6 children, live in households that struggle to put food on the table. While food insecurity rates are slowly declining, they remain much higher than before the Great Recession. The need for food assistance remains high.

Our nation's nutrition programs, in conjunction with food banks and private charity, work to meet the nutrition needs of those living in and near poverty. But not all food assistance reaches everyone in need. Gaps in access and participation are particularly concerning for vulnerable children and older Americans who are at high nutritional risk.

#### **a. A Stronger Nutrition Safety Net**

Faith communities and agencies cannot end hunger alone. Our nation's federal nutrition programs provide nineteen times more food assistance than private charity. Despite an improving economy, food insecurity and poverty rates remain high and so does the need for food assistance.

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) typically provides food commodities through food banks, pantries, soup kitchens, and shelters. As demand for food remains high at food banks across the country, additional funding for TEFAP is needed. TEFAP funding and purchases should be allowed to respond to high unemployment levels to help meet increased emergency food needs.

Our nation's largest anti-hunger program is the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly Food Stamps). SNAP helps households put food on the table during times of great need, keeping millions out of poverty. The program currently serves 42 million Americans, but only reaches about 83 percent of eligible individuals. Additionally, benefits aren't always enough to last through the month or afford a healthy diet.

#### **b. Addressing Child Hunger**

Children are especially vulnerable to the ill effects of hunger and malnutrition. Programs like SNAP, the WIC Program (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children), and school meals help protect children from hunger and ensure they are well fed and ready to learn.

- Nearly half of SNAP recipients are children.
- The WIC program currently serves 7.7 million women and young children.
- More than 22 million low-income children participated in the National School Lunch program in 2016. While the same children are also eligible for the School Breakfast Program and the Summer Food Service Program, only 56 percent received breakfast and only about 15 percent received summer food.

#### **c. Addressing Elder Hunger**

Hunger and food insecurity also have serious consequences for older Americans. Unfortunately, only 42 percent of eligible older Americans participate in SNAP. While the Commodity Supplemental Food Program primarily serves seniors by providing monthly food packages designed to supply vital nutrients,

it does not operate nationwide. Nevertheless, CSFP provides a vital safety net – a monthly bag of groceries – to more than 585,000 people every month.

Congregate and home-delivered nutrition services for seniors like those included in the Older Americans Act are also critical in alleviating senior hunger. These two programs alone serve nearly 1 million meals to older Americans in communities across the country every year.

**A Faithful Budget will fully fund our nation’s nutrition programs, covering all who are eligible, by:**

- Protecting SNAP and permanently adjusting benefit levels to reflect the cost of a healthy diet.
- Allowing TEFAP commodity purchases to respond to high unemployment levels to help meet increased emergency food assistance needs.
- Funding the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) to cover all eligible women and young children.
- Funding school breakfast and childcare feeding grants and summer EBT demonstration projects to better connect eligible children with available child nutrition programs.
- Fully funding and expanding the Commodity Supplemental Food Program so it can operate nationwide.

**3. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families**

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) was a key element of welfare reform 20 years ago. A booming economy in the 90s and effective tax credits for working families led to a reduction in poverty that hid faults in TANF’s structure. Unfortunately, economic slowdown and especially the Great Recession have exposed serious flaws that prevent TANF from effectively supporting families experiencing poverty. While almost seven in 10 poor families with children were helped by TANF in 1996, that number shrunk to less than one in four by 2015, which is particularly concerning as we know poverty was on the rise.<sup>1</sup>

As a flat-funded block grant program, TANF has lost value over time and has proven incapable of responding to increased need during recession. Further, strictly defined work requirements and time limits do not take into account a lack of good paying jobs or other barriers to employment, such as child-care, transportation, and criminal records.

**A Faithful Budget will:**

- Provide states with a substantial increase in TANF funding and an emergency fund for recessions
- Give states incentives to assist more children and families out of poverty, potentially including minimums in assistance levels and/or percent of families in poverty assisted
- Encourage states to focus on helping struggling families achieve stability by changing the measure of success and creatively broadening work requirements to include job training, apprenticeship, and other employment search support
- Require states to use TANF funds for TANF while there are families in need of aid who do not receive assistance

**4. Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) and the Refugee and Entrant Assistance (REA) Account:**

More than 21 million refugees worldwide have been displaced due to persecution because of their race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. Due to this world refugee crisis, refugees are desperately seeking safety for themselves and their families in the United States. Those lucky enough to make it to the U.S. often arrive with nothing but the clothes on their backs, but filled with the eagerness to work hard and contribute to their new communities. To successfully adjust to their new lives in the U.S. the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) must be adequately funded to meet the needs of refugees arriving. Likewise, the Refugee and Entrant Assistance (REA) Account also needs additional funds to ensure refugees have access to basic necessities and opportunities to integrate, pursue employment, and thrive in their communities.

**A faithful budget will:**

- Robustly fund the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) and the Refugee and Entrant Assistance (REA) Account to provide quality services to refugees, asylees, Special Immigrant Visa recipients, unaccompanied children, and all other populations under ORR's jurisdictions arriving in the United States and those already in the country to allow them to thrive.

**5. Count Everybody in an Equitable Census**

As mandated by the Constitution, a census is undertaken every ten years to count the population. This data guides the allocation of over \$450 billion in federal assistance every year, which is used to provide job training, health care, housing, economic development, and other important human needs. This is the largest mobilization conducted in the U.S., and it takes research, preparation, and federal investment to ensure the census is accurate. In the past, the census has tended to undercount communities of color, people experiencing poverty, young children, and rural residents, which decreases these communities' access to federal funding and proportional representation. The systematic undercounting of these communities perpetuates structural oppression and institutionalized racism and measures must be taken to correct this.

- Significantly ramp up funding for the Census Bureau in FY 2018 to ensure the Bureau has adequate resources to prepare for an accurate, modern, and equitable 2020 Census.
- The funding needed for the Census Bureau is cyclical, meaning it must be steadily increased in the years leading up to the decennial census. After years of insufficient funding, the upcoming 2020 Census is at risk for an undercount unless funding is ramped up significantly in FY 2018. To ensure all communities have economic opportunity and a strong safety net, we must invest in the census to ensure they are counted accurately.

# A FAITHFUL BUDGET FOR INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN AND POVERTY-FOCUSED DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE<sup>i</sup>

## Introduction:

### 1. The Imperative of Compassion, the Wisdom of Aid

Many of our global neighbors experience daily struggles for basic food, shelter, and health care upon which their lives depend. Sixty million are forcibly displaced from their homes. Americans who have visited impoverished countries know the challenging and sometimes horrific conditions facing populations and the incredible courage of our sisters and brothers living in such circumstances. As we have seen their pain, so, too, have we experienced their generosity -- sharing their limited homes and food with their American guests. Our own generosity must not fail them.

Even in challenging economic times, the wealth of the United States enables us to express love for our neighbors by reaching out in compassion and justice to children, women, and men around the world who are impoverished, hungry, thirsty, and homeless. In one form or another, all our faith traditions tell us that "to whom much is given, much shall be required."

International humanitarian and poverty-focused development assistance (PFDA) is vital to global human security. It helps prevent conflict, saves money, and lays the groundwork for economic growth. Robust, well-targeted foreign assistance will save millions of lives, build self-reliance among the world's most vulnerable, and benefit the United States by helping create a more secure world. International assistance also facilitates democratic governance accountable to its populace. By helping developing nations address issues such as hunger, health, and education, it empowers a productive constituent base to which the government becomes accountable. True human and global security exist when good governance sustains the development made possible by foreign assistance.

Increasing America's commitment to our neighbors in need here at home and around the world means making choices about our national priorities. Certainly, we cannot do everything. But our priorities should seek to restore our country's historic commitment to lifting up our neighbors in need and making the world a more secure place for everyone.

### 2. How Much Should the U.S. Give?

Public opinion surveys show that most Americans think that foreign aid is 20-30 percent of the U.S. federal budget. When asked how much the U.S. should give, most people answer 5 to 10 percent. Others say that the U.S. should give a tithe, or 10 percent, to help lift up the world's hungry and impoverished people. The real figure for total foreign aid is just over 1 percent of the federal budget. Aid focused on assisting the most vulnerable and impoverished sister and brothers around the world is less than that -- only about ½ of 1 percent.

The United States is the richest country in the world. While we lead other nations in the dollar amount of international assistance that it provides, America is at the bottom of developed countries in the percentage of its resources given to help alleviate international hunger and poverty. Our faith tells us that it is not the specific amount given that pleases God but the proportion of what we give to what we have (Luke 21:1-4). America can afford to increase its commitment to international humanitarian and

poverty-focused development assistance. Yet, since 2010 the international affairs budget has been reduced. At the very least, it must not be cut any further.

### **3. Aid Works!**

Over the last 20 years, the world has seen extreme poverty cut by almost half. 2.6 billion people have gained access to clean water. Since 1990 the number of hungry people worldwide dropped by 216 million to 795 million. And 6.4 million fewer children die annually before their fifth birthday (down from more than 12 million annually). Despite this progress, more needs to be done. Almost 800 million people suffer from hunger, 767 million people still live in extreme poverty. We are also facing the largest humanitarian crisis since WWII. Currently 60 million persons have been displaced from their homes – the highest number in decades. Famine has been declared in South Sudan, and near famine conditions are in northeast Nigeria, Somalia, and Yemen-threatening starvation for over 20 million people within the next six months. If there has ever been a time for us to think about what is our role in the world, now is that time.

#### **Development Assistance:**

##### **1. Global Hunger, Agricultural Development, and Nutrition**

Hunger and nutritional deficiency kill millions of children and stunt many who survive. Infants who don't have adequate nutrition in the first 1,000-days (from conception to 2 years old) experience impaired brain development that adversely impacts their entire lives. Hunger hampers learning, increases disease and renders people unable to work. Hunger impoverishes societies and undermines development.

Food and nutrition security means having access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to meet dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. Emergency food aid is a life-or-death matter for millions of children, women, and men in crisis situations around the world, and a Faithful Budget should respond with compassion and generosity. The goal of a Faithful Budget must be ending hunger and malnutrition by addressing the underlying causes.

##### ***A Faithful Budget will:***

- Increase funding for agricultural development with a priority on smallholder and women farmers.
- Support nutrition programs that help ensure pregnant mothers and infants receive extra nutrition when they need it.
- Provide robust funding for food aid, including provisions for local and regional purchase.

##### **2. Clean Water and Sanitation**

The United States is providing millions of people with improved, life-saving access to water and sanitation every year. Since 2005, USAID has enabled 31 million people with safe drinking water, and 12 million people with improved sanitation. The World Health Organization concludes that every dollar invested in clean water and sanitation yields \$8 of increased productivity and decreased health costs. Still, 748 million people still lack access to clean, safe drinking water, and 2.5 billion (one-third of the earth's population) do not have access to a toilet or latrine. In 2012, an estimated 842,000 people died – including 361,000 children – from diarrhea caused by inadequate drinking water, sanitation, and hand-washing.

***A Faithful Budget will:***

- Invest in increased access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene throughout the world.

### **3. Education**

The percentage of children not in school in less-developed countries fell from 1 in 6 in 1999 to 1 in 10 in 2012. This remarkable accomplishment means 46 million more children are receiving an education. In 2012 and 2013 U.S. aid made it possible for around 21 million children and adolescents to attend school and around 325,000 teachers and 43,000 administrators to be trained annually. In 2011, 2012 and 2013, U.S. aid provided more than 83 million textbooks and other materials and funded the construction of more than 7,000 classrooms. Yet more needs to be done. 121 million children and adolescents still are not in school.. Nearly 40% of children of primary school age – 250 million -- cannot read, write or do basic math. Education is the key to development:171 million people could lift themselves out of poverty if all children in impoverished countries graduated from primary school knowing how to read and write.

***A Faithful Budget will:***

- Robustly fund educational programs through the U.S. Agency for International Development and other venues.

### **4. Climate Change**

U.S. leadership is necessary to ensure a strong international response to climate change. U.S. multilateral climate investments, such as the Green Climate Fund (GCF), and U.S. bilateral programs, address the devastating impact of global temperature rise and extreme weather events. Low income and vulnerable communities in the United States and abroad are disproportionately affected.

The World Health Organization estimates that each year climate change causes150,000 additional deaths from malaria, malnutrition, diarrhea, flood, and heat waves in least developed countries. Climate change associated the rise in sea level could displace tens of millions of people. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), by 2030 climate change could increase the number of people living in poverty by between 35 and 122 million people.

***A Faithful Budget will:***

- Provide robust funding for bi-lateral and multi-lateral efforts to address climate change in by reducing carbon emissions and assisting vulnerable developing countries to adapt to climate change.

### **Humanitarian Assistance:**

1. The ***Migration and Refugee Assistance*** (MRA) account helps meet the needs of refugees and other displaced people. 60 million persons have been displaced from their homes – the highest number in decades, if not in history. Refugees often lack access to basic elements of survival: health care, safe shelter, clean water, and education. 86% of the world’s refugees are hosted in developing countries

that are unable to provide adequate support. U.S. aid helps these countries' efforts to provide for the most vulnerable.

We are helping developing countries bear the brunt of resettlement, but the U.S. should do our part here at home as well. The **Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR)** funds refugee resettlement in the United States. Our nation should increase, not diminish, the number of refugees resettled in our land.

***A Faithful Budget will:***

- Provide robust funding for Migration and Refugee Assistance programs.
- Provide robust funding for the Emergency Refugee and Migration account.
- Provide robust funding for increasing the number of refugees resettled in the U.S. through the Office of Refugee Resettlement.

**2. *International Disaster Assistance*** (IDA) provides lifesaving assistance following natural and man-made disasters, including violent conflicts, earthquakes, floods, and droughts. IDA also funds disaster risk reduction programs to help communities avoid, prepare for and lessen the impact of disasters. People living in poverty, especially women and children, are disproportionately injured and killed when disasters occur. IDA also assists internally displaced persons (IDPs), numbering 40.8 million, or more than 62 percent of the total population of forcibly displaced persons.

***A Faithful Budget will:***

- Provide robust funding for the International Disaster Assistance account to ensure resources are in place both to provide life-saving aid in ongoing disasters and conflicts and to meaningfully respond to future disasters.

**Global Health:**

1. *Mother and Child Health Program (MCH)*. Since 1990, 90 million children have been saved due to global efforts to reduce child mortality. USAID has played a leading role in providing low-cost, user-friendly, highly effective interventions to save lives and improve the health of vulnerable children and mothers. USAID's interventions address the main causes of under-5 death -- pneumonia, diarrhea, malnutrition, prematurity, asphyxia, malaria and newborn sepsis – in addition to the needs of mothers.

Between 1991 and 2011 in USAID's 24 priority MCH countries annual deaths of children under 5 decreased from 7.7 million to 4.8 million; newborn mortality rates declined 33 percent; and women's death rates from childbirth or pregnancy decreased an average of 5 percent per year – faster than the global average. Nutrition assistance, primarily provided in USAID global health programs, has played a critical role. USAID nutrition programs have assisted 46 million children under the age of five since 2010.

Globally 17,000 fewer children died every day in 2012 than in 1990. This is an incredible success that clearly demonstrates the effectiveness of U.S. foreign aid. We must build on this success.

Despite tremendous progress on addressing child mortality, in 2012, 6.6 million children died before their fifth birthday – around 18,000 per day. Nearly 3 million – almost 8,000 per day – were babies who died in their first 28 days of life. In 2013, nearly 800 women died every day from preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth. As of 2012 malnutrition is still responsible for nearly 3 million deaths per year of children under the age of 5, and the stunting of 161 million children annually, resulting in often life-long physical and cognitive damage.

2. *HIV-AIDS & PEPFAR*. Between 1997 and 2013 new HIV infections fell 42 percent. Between 2005 and 2013 AIDS related deaths fell 35%. More than 1.2 million babies of HIV-positive mothers were born HIV-free because of PEPFAR's support for services to prevent mother-to-child transmission. As of September 2014 PEPFAR was supporting lifesaving antiretroviral treatment for 7.7 million men, women and children worldwide. In 2014 PEPFAR supported HIV testing and counseling for more than 56.7 million people.

Despite this progress, 1.5 million people still died from AIDS-related causes worldwide in 2013. More than 35 million people worldwide were living with an HIV infection at the end of 2013, including 3.2 million children under the age of 15. Of those living with HIV, only about 38% of adults and 24% of children are receiving the medicines they need to live and thrive.

3. *Tuberculosis*. With U.S. support, between 2000 and 2013 an estimated 37 million lives were saved through effective diagnosis and treatment strategies. Still, TB is the second leading infectious killer, right behind HIV/AIDS. TB killed 1.5 million people in 2013, 80,000 of whom were children.

4. *Malaria*. The U.S. is the largest donor to the *Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria*, which has supported distribution of 450 million insecticide-treated bed nets and spraying in 44 million dwellings. Still, every 60 seconds a child dies from malaria. It is estimated that malaria has reduced the GNP per capita in countries it afflicts by more than 50 percent.

5. *Neglected tropical diseases (NTDs)*. More than 1 billion people – disproportionately the world's poorest -- are affected by NTDs – with conditions such as river blindness, snail fever, and hookworm. These diseases result in sickness, disability, blindness, disfigurement and impact physical and mental development. With a public-private partnership, the U.S. government has supported the delivery of 969 million treatments for NTDs over 7 years, reaching millions of people in 25 countries.

***A Faithful Budget will:***

- Provide robust funding toward ending childhood nutritional deficiencies, stunting and deaths from preventable and treatable diseases;
- Include the highest levels of funding for AIDS, tuberculosis (TB), malaria and neglected tropical diseases.

**Conclusion:**

When asked, "Who is my neighbor," Jesus response was unequivocal. Our neighbor is the person who needs us, whatever his nationality or faith tradition. A ***Faithful Budget*** will respond with compassion and justice for our neighbors in need around the world.

President Trump's proposed budget abysmally fails this test. Overall, it would cut U.S. foreign assistance by approximately 30 percent. It would completely zero-out the Development Assistance Account, USAID

Global Health Programs, climate funding, Emergency Refugee and Migration assistance (ERMA) and international food aid. It would unconscionably reduce International Disaster Assistance and the Migration and Refugee Assistance.

We understand that Congress is unlikely to implement the President's budget proposal as submitted. However, this budget puts pressure on Congress to reduce spending on international aid, even if the final amount of the reduction is less than what is called for by President Trump. We urge Congress robustly fund this aid, and to reject any reduction.

Our faith traditions challenge us that our nation – the richest in the world -- should increase its commitment to vulnerable, displaced and impoverished children, women and men around the world. Certainly no further reductions should be made. For FY2018, we urge Congress to fund key accounts at the following levels:<sup>ii</sup>

- At or above \$3.4 billion for Development Assistance Programs
- At or above \$3.3 billion for USAID's Global Health Programs
- At or above \$3.6 billion for Migration and Refugee Assistance
- At or above \$500.5 million for the Green Climate Fund
- At or above \$750 million for the U.S. Global Climate Change Initiative
- At or above \$50 million for Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance
- At or above \$3.4 billion for International Disaster Assistance
- At or above \$1.875 billion for Food for Peace Title II
- At or above \$100 million for the Complex Crisis Fund
- At or above \$1.6 billion for Refugee and Entrant Assistance in Labor / Health and Human Services

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<sup>i</sup> The analysis and factual information in this Section (IV) are drawn largely from InterAction's *Aid Works* and *Choose to Invest* resources.

<sup>ii</sup> These recommendations are the wide consensus of faith-based and non-governmental organizations advocating for robust humanitarian and poverty-focused international aid.

## A FAITHFUL BUDGET FOR IMMIGRANTS, REFUGEES, ASYLUM SEEKERS, AND MIGRANTS

### Introduction:

Our diverse faith traditions compel us to welcome one another with love and compassion, regardless of place of birth, religion, or race. All of us are called to love our neighbor – all of our neighbors. Generations of immigrants and refugees have made this country great with their ideas, hard work, resilience, and traditions. U.S. funding streams related to immigration policies and refugee resettlement should recognize the gifts, contributions, and struggles of asylum seekers, immigrants and refugees, ensuring justice and protection for all.

The Torah tells us: "The strangers who sojourn with you shall be to you as the natives among you, and you shall love them as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Leviticus 19:33-34). In the Christian Bible, Jesus commands us to welcome the stranger, for "what you do to the least of my brethren, you do unto me" (Matthew 25:40). The Qur'an directs us to "do good to...those in need, neighbors who are near, neighbors who are strangers, the companion by your side, the wayfarer that you meet" (4:36). The Hindu Taittiriya Upanishad reminds us: "The guest is a representative of God" (1.11.2).

Our budget recommendations are rooted in these interfaith principles, which call us to ensure that our federal dollars promote and protect the dignity of each individual.

### ***Reflecting the Need:***

- Between 2010 and 2015 the number of forcibly displaced persons worldwide grew from 33 million to over 65 million.<sup>1</sup>
- Violence in El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala was ranked highest in the Western Hemisphere in 2015.<sup>2</sup>
- An immigration reform package could reduce the budget deficit by \$135 billion in the first decade, and \$685 billion in the second decade.<sup>3</sup>
- 7 million people living in the U.S. as part of mixed status families, including 9.6 million adults and 5.9 million children who are U.S. citizens.<sup>4</sup>
- Detention and deportation break families apart, add undue harm to children, stress on sole caregivers, and perpetuate unjust immigration policies. The average wait time in immigration court is over 600 days.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "Figures at a Glance: Global Trends 2015," available at <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/figures-at-a-glance.html>; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "UNHCR Statistics: The World in Numbers," available at [http://popstats.unhcr.org/en/overview#\\_ga=1.151321913.1870768267.1483821621](http://popstats.unhcr.org/en/overview#_ga=1.151321913.1870768267.1483821621)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/immigration/news/2016/02/24/131645/they-are-refugees-an-increasing-number-of-people-are-fleeing-violence-in-the-northern-triangle/>

<sup>3</sup> Congressional Budget Office, "The Economic Impact of S. 744, the Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act" (2013), available at <https://www.cbo.gov/publication/44346>.

<sup>4</sup> Silva Mathema, "Keeping Families Together: Why All Americans Should Care About What Happens to Unauthorized Immigrants" (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2017), available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/immigration/reports/2017/03/16/428335/keeping-families-together/>.

- Nearly \$187 billion was allocated for immigration enforcement from 1986 to 2012; the \$19 billion allocated in 2016 was more than the funding for other federal law enforcement agencies combined.<sup>5</sup>
- Immigration and Customs Enforcement detained an average of 40,000 people on a daily basis in October 2016, the highest number of immigrants detained in U.S. history and \$136 million over budget.
- Detention of families expanded in 2014 at great fiscal and moral cost, causing more trauma for children and women fleeing violence in their home countries.

## **1. Address Root Causes of Forced Displacement in Central America**

Addressing forced displacement effectively and responsibly can be done only by focusing on the conditions forcing people to migrate, while at the same time ensuring the immediate protection of people who flee due to violence. As children of God, all people deserve a unified family, food on our tables, and safe homes no matter our geographical location. We know that migration is a symptom of deeper social and economic issues, including violence, insecurity, and unequal social and economic conditions. Because of this, no immigration strategy is truly comprehensive and long-term if it does not address the economic, social, and political factors which compel migration. U.S. policies and practices play a critical role around the world either by contributing to or helping address the root causes of those conditions. A faithful budget would help address the root causes of forced migration through:

### **A. Sustainable Community Development and Assistance**

U.S. government aid should support community-driven development projects in places where economic and social factors play a major role in migration. Independent agencies such as the Inter-American Foundation in the Americas already have expertise in working with communities to create effective development projects. As such, these agencies should be fully funded to continue to promote economic and social development and micro-enterprises throughout the region. Poverty and lack of opportunity are driving forces for migration of youth in the Central American region. These factors also increase the vulnerability of young people in communities that face high levels of violence. U.S. development assistance should promote culturally appropriate alternatives for youth that provide safe, sufficient and sustainable livelihoods in their home countries.

Investment in development that defends the basic human rights of all people would provide sustainable alternatives to migration for individuals seeking better futures for their families and would reduce the need for costly border enforcement, detention, and deportation systems. Investments in economic development for vulnerable populations, in particular for women and girls, have a profound multiplier

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<sup>5</sup> Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse, "Immigration Court Backlog Tool: Pending Cases and Length of Wait in Immigration Courts," available at [http://trac.syr.edu/phptools/immigration/court\\_backlog/](http://trac.syr.edu/phptools/immigration/court_backlog/)

<sup>6</sup> Doris Meissner and others, "Immigration Enforcement in the United States: The Rise of a Formidable Machinery" (Washington: Migration Policy Institute, 2013), available at <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/immigration-enforcement-united-states-rise-formidable-machinery>.

effect that benefits entire communities. We support robustly funding comprehensive community-based programs that are culturally relevant and pay particular attention to women's empowerment and child welfare programs.

### **B. Adherence to Human Rights**

The U.S. should cease funding military involvement in law enforcement or other types of "security assistance" in regions with widespread violence, instability and corruption. In such regions, it is impossible to guarantee that U.S. security assistance will be used in a way that is transparent and respects human rights. It is imperative that the United States cuts off funds and training to police and armed forces implicated in human rights abuses and endemic corruption. Collusion between law enforcement and organized crime remains a problem in Mexico and the Northern Triangle of Central America. A militarized approach contributes to violence and distrust in communities and leads to egregious human rights violations. Instead, it is within our national interest to ensure that U.S. assistance money adequately addresses the root causes of migration by prioritizing poverty reduction, good governance, and strengthening the rule of law, rather than fueling violence.

Furthermore, human rights violations perpetrated by Mexican law and migration enforcement raise serious concerns about calls for additional border security at Mexico's southern border and in Mexico's interior. All interdicted migrants must be adequately screened by an appropriately trained individual for protection concerns, including persecution, torture, and human trafficking. U.S. funding for Central America and Mexico should be conditional on the recipient states strengthening human rights conditions, including in their asylum system, and combatting corruption within entities charged with border and migration enforcement.

### **C. Refugee Protection in Region**

We acknowledge that many people are displaced from their community due to violence and persecution. For people seeking safety, economic investments alone will not serve to address their immediate need for protection. Congressional funds should support the United Nations High Commission on Refugees' expansion of in-region protection of internally displaced vulnerable populations. The UNHCR has played an important role in strengthening asylum systems in the Northern Triangle of Central America and Mexico, building up mechanisms to identify and protect the most vulnerable populations, and pursue solutions for internally displaced refugees. We recommend that Congress expand funding for UNHCR work in the region.

#### **A faithful budget to address root causes of migration will:**

- Ensure the active engagement of civil society and vulnerable populations in the design and implementation of any U.S. aid or trade initiatives.
- Support regional initiatives that consider specific country context and do not take a "one size fits all" approach.
- Invest in local violence reduction and prevention programs that help address the root causes of forced displacement at a community level.

- Increase sustainable development, education and job creation programs with particular emphasis on and to establish empowering women and girls.
- Strengthen human rights conditions on the transparency of U.S. security assistance to Mexico and Central American countries and combat corruption within entities charged with border and migration enforcement.
- Support effective national poverty reduction and trade policies that provide greater benefit and protection for indigenous populations, poor farmers, youth, and small businesses in key migrant-sending countries.
- Deny funds to abusive or corrupt security forces. In particular, no security funds should go to the Honduran government until it establishes an effective system to address human rights violations.
- Deny funds to any military forces carrying out law enforcement or immigration related tasks.

## **2. Robustly Fund Refugee Protection and Resettlement**

More than 21 million refugees worldwide have been forced to leave behind their homes to flee persecution because of their race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. Robust U.S. government funding is necessary to address human vulnerabilities abroad, provide strategic regional stability, and strengthen resettlement programs.

### **A. Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA)**

The Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA) account plays a crucial role of the Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration during the initial stages of the resettlement process. This account also funds humanitarian assistance for refugees in host countries overseas and supports refugees pursuing voluntary repatriation back to their home country, integration in a host country of asylum, and third-country resettlement when the first two solutions are not viable. MRA funds basic life-saving assistance and protection to these refugees who continue to live in displacement, including the quickly growing urban refugee population, as well as refugees from countries like Bhutan, Burma, and Somalia whose displacement remains protracted. While resettlement is available to less than 1 percent of the world's total refugee population, these funds provide a safe haven and a place to call home for the most vulnerable refugees. For refugees who have no other options, MRA funds enable the U.S. to provide these refugees with protection and the opportunity to rebuild their lives in safety.

### **B. Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance (ERMA)**

The no-year draw-down account Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance (ERMA) allows the State Department to respond to displacement emergencies that would otherwise result in regional instability. The ERMA account should be fully funded at its authorized level.

### **C. International Disaster Assistance (IDA)**

The International Disaster Assistance (IDA) account funds humanitarian assistance to internally displaced persons. This early and preventive assistance helps prevent further displacement and regional strain, such as with famine and other humanitarian relief. This account enables the U.S. to help those displaced by disaster, conflict, and war, such as internally displaced individuals living in countries facing protracted conflict and humanitarian crises in Afghanistan, Somalia, and Colombia. Meeting the needs of internally displaced persons is one way to prevent the need for them to leave their countries of origin and become refugees.

### **D. Refugee and Entrant Assistance Account (REA)**

The Refugee and Entrant Assistance (REA) account is administered by the Department of Health and Human Services Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR). The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) is a vital program that offers new life to vulnerable refugees for whom the best durable solution is to find safety and refuge in a resettlement country. ORR is also responsible for providing resources and services to torture survivors, foreign-born and domestic trafficking survivors, Special Immigrant Visa recipients who worked alongside U.S. troops, and unaccompanied children. Refugees who are resettled through the USRAP go through an extensive security screening process before admission to the U.S. Once refugees arrive in the U.S., they are supported to become oriented to the community, learn English, enroll their children in school, and find employment. With this crucial support, they often are not only able to support themselves and their families but also become contributors to their new communities, integrating with and bringing innovation to our neighborhoods.

#### **A faithful budget to protect refugees in the U.S. and abroad will:**

- Fully fund Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA) programs.
- Fully fund the Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance (ERMA) draw-down account.
- Robustly fund the International Disaster Assistance (IDA) account to assist internally displaced persons.
- Robustly fund the Refugee and Entrant Assistance (REA) account to allow resettled refugees and the communities that welcome them the resources needed to thrive.

### **3. Assist Vulnerable Populations in the United States**

All those fleeing conflict and persecution, including human trafficking survivors and other vulnerable populations, deserve the opportunity to pursue safe and fruitful lives. We support robust funding to ensure individuals are assisted as they pursue safety in the United States. In addition, applications for adjustment of status for refugees and asylum seekers should be covered by appropriations and general tax revenues rather than by fees from other immigrants.

## **A. Ensure due process for and protection of migrants, children, and asylum seekers**

No funding should go towards criminal prosecution of migrants for entry and reentry (formerly known as *Operation Streamline*), which has led to serious human rights and civil rights violations. Improper entry and reentry are now the most prosecuted federal offenses in the United States, swelling the ranks of federal prisons and taxing an already overburdened justice system. Funds would be better spent preventing migrant deaths, improving rescue and recovery efforts along the U.S. Mexico border, and strengthening access to asylum.

The federal government can help individuals comply with immigration laws by increasing access to legal services for all immigrants navigating the system. In particular, all unaccompanied children and asylum seekers should have access to counsel. Currently, many children and even infants have to appear before immigration judges without legal representation. As a consequence, an overwhelming majority of children without attorneys are ordered deported. Asylum seekers and unaccompanied children should have legal representation so that they can fully present their case for protection.

Funding for services for torture victims has remained static for many years, resulting in a demand for services that exceeds resources and has caused programs to close or drastically scale back services. Furthermore, while the number of identified trafficking victims served has risen, funding levels have not risen since the program's inception and service periods are currently too short to allow victims to attain self-sufficiency before losing this life-saving support.

Rather than funding an increase in deterrence mechanisms, criminal prosecutions, and surveillance along the southwest border, government resources should be spent enhancing training on child protection, and expanding upon interpretation services available at the border, in detention, at asylum offices, and during court hearings, including for those who speak indigenous languages.

## **B. Fund additional Immigration Judges and Judge Teams**

Examining the recent allocation of resources to the immigration courts highlights a deep flaw in the current system. Current funding has proven insufficient to meet the needs of today's immigration courts. In order to reduce lengthy delays and strengthen the U.S. immigration system Congress should fund additional immigration judges and judge teams. The immigration court backlog has doubled over the past 6 years ballooning to over 550,000 cases. This increase paired with inadequate court staffing exacerbates the time that individuals - including vulnerable populations such as asylum seekers, trauma survivors, victims of gender based violence, individuals with mental illness, and children - spend in detention before having their cases heard before a qualified judge. Additional judges and their teams should also be subject to continuing education and training on how to assess cases with the aforementioned populations in a timely and just manner, with proper use of discretion.

## **C. Increase access to the immigration system**

Everyone is deserving of legal representation; immigrants who have representation are 15 times more likely to pursue lawful status than those who do not have adequate resources or knowledge of the system.<sup>7</sup>[1] A faithful budget must also prioritize increasing access to legal counsel, pro bono legal services, and legal orientation programs. This should include funding and expanding the Department of Justice Legal Orientation Program (LOP) for immigrant detainees and the Legal Orientation Program for Custodians of Unaccompanied Children (LOPC). Approximately three-quarters of detention centers have no LOP program. Congress should guarantee LOP programs at all immigrant detention centers.

Congress should also fund immigration court advice desks in communities with detention centers and in the courts with the largest immigration court backlogs. Our immigration laws are vast and complex. As people of faith we are called to ensure that government resources are spent with the individual's well-being in mind. Legal orientation programs and advice desks make a tangible difference in the lives of immigrants otherwise isolated in an unjust system.

**A faithful budget assisting vulnerable populations in the U.S. will:**

- End funding for en masse criminal prosecutions or further criminalizing of migrants, asylum seeker and other vulnerable populations.
- Increase due process for migrants - especially children - navigating the asylum process by expanding access to pro bono legal services.
- Provide robust funding for programs that prevent, educate communities about, and serve survivors of human trafficking and torture.
- Fund efforts to reduce lengthy waits for visa adjudications, to train and procure additional immigration judges and judge teams, and to reduce the number of people held in detention while awaiting their case adjudication.

**4. Invest in Community and Immigrant Integration Over Exclusion**

Rather than utilizing precious resources to apprehend, detain, and deport immigrants who make positive contributions to our society by working, providing for their families, and paying taxes, Congress should serve the best interests of our society by enacting immigration reform so that immigrants can earn their legal status and increase the many ways they contribute economically, socially, and civically to the United States.

**A. Increase Access to Integration Services and Public Benefits**

Communities are strongest when we welcome and support one another. When provided the assistance they need to rebuild their lives, immigrants and resettled refugees open businesses, revitalize towns, and contribute economically, socially, and spiritually to our communities. Immigrants should have easy

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<sup>7</sup> Ingrid V. Eagly and Shafer, Steven, A National Study of Access to Counsel in Immigration Court, University of Pennsylvania Law (2015), [ssrn.com/abstract=2581161](https://ssrn.com/abstract=2581161).

access to support systems that allow them to feel part of their community, including having proper access to education, healthcare, mental health and trauma recovery assistance, public assistance programs that support low income families, emergency services, and social services.

Congress should invest in U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Office of Citizenship, specifically Immigrant Integration and Citizenship grant programs that help immigrants integrate and pursue citizenship. A faithful budget should improve and expand access to a full continuum of services and benefits for all immigrants and refugees.

We support immigrants' easy and guaranteed access to Medicaid and poverty-alleviating, safety-net, and hunger-reduction programs, such as SNAP (food stamps), WIC (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children), EITC (earned income tax credit), CTC (child tax credit), and School Meals, for all, regardless of immigration status. Extending access to quality, affordable health care, affordable housing, food and nutrition programs, disability assistance, job training, ESL programs, mental health and trauma recovery support, and disaster assistance to everyone, regardless of immigration status, is a core way to live up to the faithful call to love our neighbors.

## **B. End Immigration Detention**

People of faith who visit, accompany, or represent immigrants in detention facilities witness firsthand the toll incarceration takes on those detained, their families, and our communities. We support an end to immigration detention and recommend Congress spend funds on humane alternatives for immigrants navigating the immigration system.

We support funding streams that promote the use of community-based alternatives that have the best interest of immigrants in mind. While steps have been taken to promote alternatives to detention, immigration detention is still excessively relied upon at great financial and moral cost. Immigration detention quintupled between 1994 and 2011 without regard to cost, space limitations, or effectiveness of available alternatives. The exponential growth of the immigration detention industry has reached an all-time high, forged on an unhealthy reliance on for-profit prison companies.

In one year alone, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) spends upwards of \$2 billion on detention and only a tiny fraction of that amount on Alternatives to Detention (ATD) programs – which include privately-contracted GPS ankle monitors.

Community-based, case-management ATD programs are woefully underfunded even in proportion to more restrictive ATDs.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, private prison corporations have overtaken ATD programs, lobbying for increased surveillance and restriction of immigrants under the guise of ATDs.<sup>9</sup> People of

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<sup>8</sup> Center for Migration Studies, *Unlocking Human Dignity: A Plan to Transform the U.S. Immigration Detention System* (2015), [uscgb.org/about/migration-and-refugee-services/upload/unlocking-human-dignity.pdf](https://uscgb.org/about/migration-and-refugee-services/upload/unlocking-human-dignity.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> American Friends Service Committee, *Community Cages: Profitizing Community Corrections and alternatives to incarceration* (2016), [afscarizona.files.wordpress.com/2016/08/communitycages.pdf](https://afscarizona.files.wordpress.com/2016/08/communitycages.pdf).

faith are willing to continue accompanying immigrants as they navigate the immigration system. A faithful budget would not allocate billions of dollars to the costly, unjust, unnecessary, and dangerous detention of immigrants.

### **C. Cease Funding for Militarizing U.S. Communities**

We are called by our many faith traditions to ensure that all individuals are treated with dignity and respect. Interior enforcement and border policies should reflect these values and protect human life, tribal sovereignty, sacred sites, and public lands. Respect for human and civil rights in border enforcement policies is essential to safeguarding the integrity of our society. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) must be prepared to engage communities with respect and professionalism.

Over the past twenty years, the federal government has dramatically militarized the U.S.-Mexico border, negatively impacting the civil and human rights of border residents, encouraging racial profiling, and sowing distrust and fear between communities and the law enforcement entities they rely upon for protection. Gone largely unchecked, these operations have stifled the economic vitality and overall well-being of U.S. border communities. Current enforcement practices are devastating our communities and congregations, contributing to the deaths of thousands of migrants pushed into remote desert regions, and violating the rights of U.S. citizens and migrants alike. A faithful budget must radically shift funding priorities for border and interior enforcement by:

- I. **Abandoning barriers and militarization along our southern border in the name of “border security”.** Overwhelmingly, border communities have said that border wall or fencing does not help their condition; it does not stem the flow of forced migration, meet critical humanitarian protection needs, or help people navigate a legal system that has not been meaningfully updated in more than 30 years.
- II. **Ensure human rights protections at the border and protect the civil liberties of border communities.** We recommend Congress ensure all CBP funding is contingent on strengthened oversight, transparency, and accountability measures to ensure CBP officers adhere to best policy practices. We recommend regular public reports on CBP activities and assessment of CBP activities for efficacy, weighing the impacts on border communities.

### **D. End Collaboration between Local Police and Federal Authorities**

At the same time that funding for border militarization has dramatically increased, so has funding for increased criminalization and internal enforcement programs. These programs, including the Secure Communities and 287(g) programs, have made survivors of domestic violence and other victims and witnesses afraid to report crimes or testify against perpetrators for fear that they or a loved one will be apprehended, detained, and deported as a result. Local police can best protect the public safety when all community members trust that they can report crimes. Secure Communities and the 287(g) program, run contrary to this community-policing objective. Even by Immigration and Customs Enforcement’s

(ICE) own standards, the program does not meet stipulated policy intent or objectives and has proven detrimental to protecting community safety and constitutional rights. A faithful budget would not mandate or fuel collaboration between ICE and local police, and would instead invest in community-driven policing reforms.

#### **E. Increase funds for the Department of Homeland Security’s Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (OCRCL)**

The OCRCL should be robustly funded and maintain its independence and oversight authorities to ensure that complaints for the 287(g) program, detention conditions, Secure Communities, inappropriate enforcement around “sensitive locations” including places of worship, and other immigration enforcement misconduct are appropriately processed. The OCRCL should also be adequately funded to proactively protect undocumented immigrants against labor violations and from other perpetrators seeking to exploit them.

#### **F. Adequately fund the Office of Professional Responsibility**

Adequate fund for CBP’s Office of Professional Responsibility would allow for the hiring of criminal investigators to ensure timely and thorough investigations into allegations of corruption and excessive use of force involving CBP personnel. Since January 2010, at least 53 individuals have died as the result of an encounter with CBP agents. At least 48 deaths resulted from the use of force or coercion.<sup>10</sup> With such a high number of deaths there is an urgent need and responsibility to investigate the deaths and provide closure to the victims’ family members, while holding the appropriate officials accountable for their actions.

#### **A faithful budget should prioritize community over exclusion and:**

- Improve and expand access to a full continuum of services and benefits for all immigrants and refugees for integration and public benefits.
- Invest in successful programs in the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Office of Citizenship, specifically Immigrant Integration and Citizenship grant programs that help immigrants integrate and pursue citizenship.
- Maintain and expand spending for translation services, tax credits, and other direct services for immigrants.
- Eliminate funding for the Secure Communities program, 287(g) and similar programs that mandate or incentivize the collaboration between local police and federal immigration authorities.
- Invest in accountability mechanisms for the Department of Homeland Security personnel and conduct.

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<sup>10</sup> American Civil Liberties Union, Death and Injuries in CBP encounters since January 2010 (May 2016), [www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/field\\_document/may\\_2016\\_dead\\_and\\_injured\\_by\\_cbp\\_officials.pdf](http://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/field_document/may_2016_dead_and_injured_by_cbp_officials.pdf)

### **Conclusion:**

A faithful budget does not separate families, detain children, terrorize immigrants, or further militarize U.S. communities at the expense of vital education, housing, and nutritional assistance programs that promote public safety and alleviate poverty at home and abroad. Members of Congress should act with moral authority and resist funding enforcement-only policies which are not to the benefit of our nation or our communities.

We will continue to press Congress to work in a bipartisan manner to pass legislation that protects the God-given dignity and rights of every human being, including migrants, immigrants, and refugees. As we work toward practical solutions, let us together build a budget that values the unity of all families, protects the safety of all communities, and brings people together rather than tearing them apart. As a matter of faith, we are called to act.

## A FAITHFUL BUDGET FOR ALL OF CREATION

### **Introduction:**

A Faithful Budget must encompass a reverence for the entirety of Creation, making choices that protect our air, water, land, creatures, and human beings. It is the moral responsibility of our nation – and our sacred task as people of faith – to protect our ecosystems, work for environmental justice, and address climate change.

Our faith traditions teach us that we have been entrusted by God to care for Creation, on behalf of current and future generations. We live in a deeply interconnected world where the gifts of clear air, clean water, and majestic wild spaces, teeming with diverse life, must be protected. We must honor and sustain these gifts, not just for our use and enjoyment but also because of their intrinsic worth. Just as we are called to heal and care for one another, so, too, are we called to help heal the Earth so that humankind and all of Creation may sustainably coexist.

Yet we have failed to serve as good caretakers and protectors for much of Creation. We have degraded the essential goodness of our natural environment and threatened the health and wellbeing of countless families and communities in the United States and around the world. We have relied on dirty fossil fuels that emit climate-altering carbon emissions into the atmosphere, wreaking havoc on our already-fragile ecosystems.

A Faithful Budget should provide sufficient resources to protect all the life-sustaining gifts of Creation; it must reflect a commitment to healing the brokenness between people and the rest of the created world. It must safeguard God's creation, address the impacts of climate change on our most vulnerable and at risk brothers and sisters, and fulfill our moral obligation to future generations in the United States and internationally.

A Faithful Budget would fund the government's ability to celebrate the goodness of creation, stand with impacted and marginalized communities, protect life-sustaining gifts of air and water, invest in a sustainable energy future, and prioritize research and science.

### Reflecting the Need:

- Clean air is necessary for life, yet more than half of all Americans -- 166 million individuals -- live in counties with unhealthy levels of ozone or particle pollution.<sup>1</sup>
- Our unique and precious system of public lands provides a home for our fellow creatures and supports the whole of Creation; however, without sufficient funding for wise management, these lands may not be available for future generations.
- The infrastructure that supports clean water in the United States is in dire need of repairs, and \$1 trillion will be needed in the next 25 years to repair and expand U.S. drinking water infrastructure.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.lung.org/assets/documents/healthy-air/state-of-the-air/sota-2016-full.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.waterworld.com/articles/print/volume-28/issue-4/departments/washington-update/new-report-highlights-staggering-costs-ahead-for-water-infrastructure-by-patrick-crow-washington-correspondent.html>

- Human-induced global climate change, which threatens the health and well-being of all of Creation, particularly the most vulnerable among us, is perpetuated by the use of carbon-intensive energy sources such as coal and oil, the prime energy sources in the United States.
- We have a moral obligation to vulnerable and at risk communities that are most impacted by the effects of climate change; however, our current federal funding commitments to international and domestic climate finance mechanisms are under threat, which could cause potentially irreparable harm to U.S. funded adaptation and mitigation efforts everywhere.

As people of faith, we are called to be present in places where the need is great and to advocate for a just and sustainable world. As a reflection of our nation's priorities, a Faithful Budget must address injustice and relieve suffering in all of these ways.

### **Celebrate the Goodness of Creation:**

Our faith traditions teach that we have a divine responsibility to promote the flourishing of all of creation. We are grateful that past generations saw fit to set aside public space and protected lands that nourish both communities and ecosystems. Our public lands are thriving, offering immeasurable benefits, from higher soil and water quality to sustainable timber management.

As they have done since our earliest days, natural places and wilderness play a key role in shaping our relationship to our communities and to God. These lands and their intrinsic beauty and value must be maintained and used wisely. Those portions set aside by past generations were not intended to be used for energy or mineral development but rather to protect a part of the United States and the whole of Creation that, if destroyed, would be truly irreplaceable.

### A Faithful Budget would:

- Provide land management agencies in the Departments of Interior and Agriculture with sufficient funding to ensure they remain:
  - 1) recreation spaces for all
  - 2) uncorrupted by drilling and timbering,
  - 3) vibrant ecosystems and habitats for God's creatures, especially threatened and endangered species.
- Provide support for lands protected under the National Landscape Conservation System.
- Fully fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which has been critical in protecting local watersheds and recreation lands around the country.
- Support the Department of Interior's responsibility to native and indigenous lands and peoples through programs like Federal Subsistence Management Program and the Indian Water Rights Office.

### **Stand with Impacted and Marginalized Communities:**

Communities at home and around the world experience the devastating effects of climate change and environmental degradation. Our actions have disproportionate impacts on the health and quality of life for our brothers and sisters in low-income communities, marginalized groups, women, older people, children, urban and rural areas, Native American communities, and communities of color.

More than 6 million children in the U.S. currently live with asthma, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control. Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America research shows that one in six African American children have asthma. That same research shows that asthma rates are 80 percent higher in Puerto Ricans than whites. Communities that live in low-income housing located next to Superfund sites -- areas contaminated by dangerous levels of toxic waste -- often become "cancer clusters," or communities that face abnormally high rates of the chronic disease. Our budget must play an important role in funding policies that support healing and remediation for these disproportionately impacted communities. For example, our budget should ensure that people in Flint, MI will finally be able to drink safe and clean water.

We recognize that children, women, and workers bear the greatest health impacts of exposures to toxic chemicals and pesticides. For decades, chemicals and pesticides have been placed on the market without even knowing if they are safe. More than 80,000 industrial chemicals remain untested and unregulated. A number of pesticides and industrial chemicals are known or suspected to cause cancer, cognitive impairment, and fertility challenges, in addition to other health conditions. Exposures to chemicals of concern can affect someone throughout their lifetime and even future generations. Communities of color and low-income communities are particularly vulnerable as many toxic waste or chemical manufacturing plants are in or near these communities.

As the historically largest contributor to climate change, our nation must assume responsibility for our actions by supporting communities most affected by climate change, many living in developing nations on less than \$1 per day, to prepare for and adapt to climate change-related impacts. Without strong commitments from the United States and others, climate-related disasters and impacts will increase environmental pressures, exacerbate hunger, and contribute to regional instability. To this end, a Faithful Budget would prioritize addressing global climate change as it affects God's Creation and the people who live here, particularly those in the world's most vulnerable nations.

A Faithful Budget would:

- Fund the EPA's Environmental Justice program, which seeks to connect with those who have been historically underrepresented in environmental decision making to ensure all people enjoy the same protections from environmental and health hazards.
- Include adequate funding for international adaption and mitigation efforts that are related specifically to addressing global climate change in the world's most vulnerable developing nations.
- Fund the Health and Human Services' Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, which provides federal funds to low-income individuals and families to help with utility bills, energy crises or pay for weatherization projects.
- Fully fund grants to clean up brownfields – former industrial sites that are environmentally contaminated with dangerous chemicals or radioactive waste – often located in low-income communities and communities of color.
- Support funding for vulnerable communities, including Alaska native villages, many which are already facing an existential threat due to climate change and sea level rise.
- Fully fund science and enforcement programs (especially for tribes and states) under the EPA that test and regulate pesticides, pesticide residues, and industrial chemicals to decrease harmful exposure to toxic chemicals for all people, and in particular children, women, communities of color, low-income communities, and workers who come into contact with chemicals.

- Fully fund implementation or strong rules to protect children, farmers, farmworkers from pesticides such as the Worker Protection Standard and Certified Applicator rules.

### **Protect Life-Sustaining Gifts of Air and Water:**

All human beings deserve the life-giving gifts of clean air and clean water. Over the past four decades, great progress has been made in cleaning up the air and waterways due to bold funding and legislation. Enforced by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), landmark laws, including the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act, have greatly improved the health and quality of life of millions. A Faithful Budget provides the necessary resources to promote air and water quality standards and pollution control technology. In addition, a Faithful Budget should provide for improvement of these statutes as we learn more about the external factors that affect the quality of air and water to ensure a healthy future for all our communities and families.

Despite progress since the enactment of the Clean Air Act, over half of all U.S. residents live in areas of the country with unhealthy levels of air pollution.<sup>3</sup> The public health risks of such pollution fall heavily on the most vulnerable among us: children, the elderly, communities of color, and those already suffering ill health. One striking example is from a [University of Minnesota study](#), which found disproportionate air pollution in minority communities.<sup>4</sup> The study found that minorities were exposed to 38% more pollutants than whites, putting them at risk for heart disease and asthma. These statistics demand continued and sufficient funding for new and existing clean air protections, especially for vulnerable communities

The Clean Water Act and Safe Drinking Water Act help ensure that our water supply is clean and reliable. These consumer protections must be expanded; the pollution of waterways and the erosion of critical water infrastructure continue to be a public health threat, highlighted this year by the crisis in Flint, Michigan. In addition, the Clean Water State Revolving Fund and the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund are both critical, providing matching funds for state and municipal agencies to maintain water quality. Billions of dollars will be needed in the coming decades to maintain current high levels of water quality in the United States.

#### A Faithful Budget would:

- Fully fund the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and our public health officials, so they can protect communities from pollution and mitigate its consequences.
- Equip the EPA's Office of Environmental Justice to ameliorate disproportionate pollution in minority communities.
- Heal those disproportionately impacted communities whose health has suffered as a direct result of air- and water-polluting industries and energy projects and ensure funding for a transparent and comprehensive assessment of new energy projects before they are approved.
- Provide critical funding for the Clean Water Act and Safe Drinking Water Act to ensure that our water supply is clean and reliable. This includes: the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund, the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System, the Water and Wastewater loan and grant program, and the Office of Water.

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<sup>3</sup> American Lung Association, State of the Air 2011

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2014/04/15/pollution-is-substantially-worse-in-minority-neighborhoods-across-the-u-s/?utm\\_term=.d69aa8318727](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2014/04/15/pollution-is-substantially-worse-in-minority-neighborhoods-across-the-u-s/?utm_term=.d69aa8318727)

### **Invest in a Sustainable Energy Future:**

A Faithful Budget acknowledges the true social, economic, environmental, and public health cost of fossil fuels. Too many of our current methods used to extract and burn energy sacrifice the health and well-being of communities in exchange for profit. Practices such as mountaintop removal mining, hydraulic fracturing, and onshore and offshore oil drilling have had devastating impacts on the natural world and human communities. Studies have shown that increased birth defects, water contamination, and poor safety standards are just a few of the consequences of the extraction of oil, natural gas, and coal. Poor air and water quality are also consequences of our dependences upon these unsustainable sources of the bulk of our energy needs.

We must prioritize investments in renewable energy, including wind, solar, and tidal power, as well as reinvigorate support for energy efficiency programs to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels. In addition to investment in expanding the use of renewable, sustainable energy sources, we must also expand our research and development programs that will promote cutting-edge technology for future generations. Those investments should also include investment in solar panel installation and wind turbine technician education, in order to prepare people to take advantage of new job opportunities and help the environment at the same time.

One critical step in reordering our national investments is to shift energy subsidies toward renewable energy and energy efficiency, and away from oil, coal, and other fossil fuel production. For too long, we have failed to acknowledge the true social costs of fossil fuels. Government subsidies and tax loopholes merely prop up these artificially inexpensive energy sources while endangering the health and well-being of our communities and our environment. We can no longer afford to provide financial support to industries that are unwilling to change their business practices in the face of global climate change, pollute communities and families, and permanently damage God's Creation. Energy subsidies must invest in industries that can produce energy without harming Creation and God's people.

#### A Faithful Budget would:

- End subsidies for the fossil fuel industry, including coal, oil (onshore and offshore), and natural gas.
- Provide energy subsidies, if any, for renewable energy research and development and energy efficiency technologies.
- Increase funding for research and development of new types of renewable energy and energy efficiency measures that can be distributed widely.

### **Prioritize Research and Science:**

A Faithful Budget acknowledges the critical role that research and science play in keeping our communities and families safe. Climate research and science must be robustly funded so we can adequately measure, track, and respond to the threats of a warming planet. Our efforts to answer the call to be responsible stewards of the earth depend on a fact-based understanding of our changing planet and its effects on all of creation. Agencies that work to monitor and track air quality, conduct research on our warming oceans, develop new energy technologies, and track chemical safety measures are just a few of many important bodies that must be fully funded.

A Faithful Budget would:

- Ensure that basic weather monitoring, oceans, and earth science programs are fully funded across federal agencies, including grants typically given to universities and local communities.
- Fully fund climate research programs that make critical contributions around human health, air quality, ecosystems, water, and climate change.
- Provide adequate funding for energy innovation and research in clean energy technologies.
- Ensure that agencies like the Bureau of Land Management and Environmental Protection Agency are able to collect data on methane emissions and other greenhouse gas emissions.
- Promote scientific research in the fields of climate change, air and water quality, and chemical safety.

The United States has an obligation in law and honor to protect and support the well-being of Native nations and their citizens in this country. This obligation arises from treaties and other settlements, and from trust responsibilities that the federal government took on when it dispossessed Native peoples of their homelands. The health care, education, and economic supports that Indian nations still seek today have already been “paid for” by more than 90 million acres of “reserved” land taken by or ceded to the United States government between 1887 and 1934 as more colonists settled in Indian country. These 90 million acres are in addition to the land that was already lost when Native people were first moved off the coasts toward the interior of the country, and then moved again on forced marches onto reservations and into “Indian Territory” as Europeans continued to arrive in large numbers. The robust economy of this country is founded on land that was traded for promises of support “forever.”

The federal government is obliged to fulfill its trust responsibility whether or not it decides to lower taxes, increase military spending, or decrease spending on programs that are unpopular with a ruling political party. These obligations come first and the federal government must arrange its finances so that its foundational responsibilities are met. The Supreme Court has defined this trust responsibility as a “moral obligation of the highest responsibility and trust.” (*Seminole Nation v. United States*, 1942).

“The special relationship between Indians and the federal government is the result of solemn obligations that have been entered into by the United States government.

Down through the years, through written treaties and formal and informal agreements, our government has made specific commitments to the Indian people. For their part, the Indians have often surrendered claims to vast tracts of land and have accepted life on government reservations. In exchange, the government has agreed to provide community services such as health, education and public safety—services that would presumably allow Indian communities to enjoy a standard of living comparable to that of other Americans.

This goal, of course, has never been achieved. But the special relationship between the Indian tribes and the federal government that arises from these agreements continues to carry immense moral and legal force.”

**President Richard Nixon**  
***Special Message to the Congress on Indian Affairs, July 8, 1970.***

A faithful budget will incorporate this obligation of honor as a foundational priority. Projects and funding that assist tribes to survive and thrive in the lands left to them fulfill one part of that obligation. Full inclusion of Native communities and families in assistance available to *all citizens in need* is another feature of a faithful budget.

### **Government to Government Relations:**

Under “self-determination” laws, tribal governments are increasingly taking over the management of federal programs in Indian country. These programs range from health care to housing and from education to road building. Under a contract with the federal government, the tribal governments are entitled to a payment equal to the cost of federal administration of the program. When domestic programs are being cut over all – under sequestration or other budget cutting schemes – the Congress has typically allocated to tribes less than the agreed amount. In three recent Supreme Court cases, the law in this area has become quite clear: the federal government must allocate the full “contract cost” to the managing tribes. In the last few years, this obligation has been met, but Congress has not yet recognized it as a “mandatory” budget item.

Another cost-cutting scheme often applied to domestic programs is the “block grant.” Instead of supporting the full range of services needed by low-income families, the federal budget sometimes allocates flat amounts to states, based on population. To save money, the formula normally allocates just a percentage of the aggregate amount that all

The trust responsibility of the United States toward Native nations is a “moral obligation of the highest responsibility and trust.” Supreme Court in *Seminole v. U.S., 1942*

the families in a state would have received directly from the federal programs. In addition to the many problems that block grants create for states and for families that need support, they also pose an impossible barrier for many tribal governments. Tribal governments are not parts of states – under the Constitution, they relate directly to the federal government. Tribal funding should come directly to tribal programs or to tribes to be placed under their management.

### **Health Care for Native Communities:**

American Indians and Alaska Natives born today have a life expectancy that is 4.4 years less than the other Americans, according to the Indian Health Service. In some areas, the contrast is especially stark. While the average South Dakotan can expect to live to age 79.5, residents of the Pine Ridge Reservation live an average of only 67 years. Many factors contribute to these ultimate reflections of poor health, according to the National Indian Health Board: historic trauma, poverty, lack of access to healthy foods, loss of culture and environmental pollutants. The lack of a well-developed public health structure in the midst of this “perfect storm” contributes to the near inevitability of ill health and untimely death.

Health care funding for Native communities comes through the Indian Health Service (IHS), tribally operated health programs, urban Indian health programs, and the Special Diabetes Program for Indians. In addition, eligible Native individuals participate in Veterans’ Health Care, Medicaid, Medicare or private insurance. Many of the services offered in IHS and Tribal health facilities and programs are underwritten by Medicaid and Medicare. The expanded availability of Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act sharply reduced the number of uninsured people in Indian country. Ending the Affordable Care Act and making deep cuts in Medicaid will deny access to health care to many in Indian country and diminish the availability of Indian health facilities. Frail elders who rely on Medicaid for nursing care will

be seriously affected by such cuts, as will elders in all communities.

Current regulations provide Tribal Health and IHS programs with a 100% reimbursement rate for services they provide to patients who are eligible for Medicaid. These reimbursements provide Indian health clinics and hospitals with a reliable income stream, so that they can develop a full range of programs for their patients. Urban Indian health centers and clinics do not have this assurance; they seek a legislative change to ensure reliable access to full Medicaid reimbursement. A faithful budget would protect Medicaid and Medicaid expansion funds to support Indian health programs and the care of all people who struggle to afford health care.

Three IHS facilities in the Great Plains region have been so underfunded that they have been “de-certified” by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid within the Department of Health and Human Services. The oversight agency noted a continuing lack of sufficient staffing, up-to-date and functional equipment and other deficiencies that had not been remedied over a period of time. The de-certification means that these facilities have lost a significant income stream. They are now *even more* under-staffed and under-resourced. They seek a specific “bail-out” from the federal government so that they can resume offering services to the communities that rely on them.

In two days of hearings before the House Appropriations Subcommittee that deals with Indian Health, tribal leaders echoed each other in asking for focused support for mental health services, drug and alcohol abuse services and preventive care to enable tribes and tribal communities to intervene early in the root causes of youth suicide, family violence, and systemic illnesses such as heart conditions, hepatitis, and diabetes. Many also mentioned the Tiwahe program (Tiwahe means “family” in Lakota) which coordinates wrap-around services to help families reeling from the effects of physical, social, and mental health challenges. A faithful budget would invest early in maintaining and regaining health for individuals and families who are deeply challenged by historic trauma, poverty, loss of culture, and loss of access to healthy indigenous food sources.

#### **Indian Education:**

Education funding comes through the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) within the Department of the Interior, from the Department of Education, and – for land grant colleges – from the Department of Agriculture. While some privately operated schools continue, tribes are increasingly taking control of education in Indian country, and making demands for a higher standard of education in BIE schools. Some BIE schools have gain notoriety in the last decade and more for their appalling physical condition. As of 2014, the total BIE budget for the repair and replacement of 60 schools in “poor” condition was less than \$1 million. (In contrast, the Department of Defense, which operates a comparable number of schools for military dependents in similarly challenging locations, was given a five year commitment of \$3.7 billion for repair and replacement of 134 schools in substandard condition.)

The backlog of BIE construction to bring “poor” schools to “acceptable” condition is \$1.3 billion. For FY 2017, the BIE repair and replacement budget line was increased from \$130.3, compared to the \$2

million allocated for that line item in 2014. Faith support the request of the National Congress of American Indians and the National Indian Education Association for an allocation of \$263 million in FY 2018 – an *annual* amount needed over the next five years to bring all substandard BIE schools up to standard.

A faithful budget will provide full support for the rebuilding of dilapidated schools and for the education that takes place *within* these schools. Specifically, support for Native language instruction and tribal cultural classes help tribes to pass on their core values and hopes to their children, while full internet access provides connections to the rest of Indian country and to resources available across the country.

### **Indian Housing:**

In January this year, just before the Inauguration, the Department of Housing and Urban Development released a report on Native American, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian housing programs. The report summarized that Congress had provided a fairly flat level of funding – around \$667 million – for the cornerstone Indian Housing block grant for each of the last twenty years. During that time, inflation had eaten into the value of the total, so that \$667 million in 1997 carries only a \$440 million purchasing power today. The report, prepared by the Urban Institute, found that

- Among Native Americans living in tribal areas, 32 percent are living below the poverty line. Among those living in surrounding counties, the poverty rate is 28 percent. The national poverty rate as of now is 18 percent.
- 57 percent of the homes in tribal areas are troubled by overcrowding or lack of basic amenities: heat, sanitation or other physical problems.
- About 68,000 new units are needed: 33,000 to deal with overcrowding and 35,000 to replace severely inadequate homes.
- Although nearly all tribal areas report these problems (with 99 percent reporting a waiting list), Alaska and tribal areas in Arizona and New Mexico report the highest incidence of poor housing.
- The major barrier to creating more housing is lack of adequate funding. In addition, high and rapidly increasing costs, lack of infrastructure development, and the availability of trained workers get in the way of housing production.

The president's initial "skinny budget" outline proposed a 25 percent cut in the Indian Housing Block Grant, and was unclear about continuing support for successful mortgage subsidy programs.

A faithful budget would build on what works, by combining increased funding for Indian housing production with increased investments in infrastructure and skilled training for unemployed people in Indian country. The National Congress of American Indians gives numbers to this sensible and faithful approach: At least \$700 million for the Indian housing block grants, \$70 million for the Indian Community Development block grant, plus \$12 million for two mortgage subsidy programs. In addition, the National Congress of American Indians names \$12 million for the Native Hawaiian housing block

grant, and \$.5 million to support a mortgage subsidy program in Hawaii.

## FAITHFUL BUDGET FOR A HEALTHY NATION

### **Introduction:**

A Faithful Budget ensures a health system that provides quality, affordable, accessible, equitable, accountable healthcare for all. All of our faiths deeply value the care of the sick and infirm. We are all challenged to care for those most in need. In our large and complex nation we know that it is the role of government to ensure that these needs are met. Many in the faith community partner with the government to provide needed services. It is this unique blend of public/private partnership that is the hallmark of the health system in the United States. At this moment the system is suffering from the unpredictability of federal commitment to ensuring that health services are adequately provided in our nation. To be faithful, this political gamesmanship must stop.

### **People Who Struggle:**

As people of faith, we are most aware of those who struggle to achieve access to quality care. A faithful approach to the provision of health services requires that costs be shared equitably among all. It is fundamentally unjust to expect that the costs will be borne only by private charity or by individuals who have no capacity to pay. Therefore, it becomes the role of government to ensure that all of our residents have access to this basic right to healthcare. Of particular concern to people of faith are those who are most often marginalized in the delivery of care. Specifically we are concerned about:

- People in the rural parts of our nation who have experienced the closure of community hospitals and clinics and now find themselves without access to care.
- Women who often have specific needs that go untreated or unacknowledged.
- People of color have notoriously different medical outcomes even if they can access healthcare in our nation. A faithful budget will work to reduce these disparities.
- LGBTQ people also suffer discrimination in medical care.
- Native Americans and Alaska Natives, especially those in remote locations, who rely on the underfunded and inadequate Indian Health Service.

### **Affordable Care Act:**

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) was a significant improvement in the accessibility to health services allowing 21 million more people access to healthcare. While it has taken a few years for the full implementation of the legislation to stabilize markets, the political uncertainty is frightening our people and undercutting its effectiveness. A faithful budget focuses on the real needs of our communities rather than serving as a vehicle to score political points.

A Faithful Budget preserves and extends the gains of the ACA by fully funding it and holding to the following principles:

- Ensuring that healthcare is actually affordable through a combination of cost containment and premium and out-of-pocket subsidies for low income families.

- Enhanced accountability mechanisms to ensure that any premium rate increases are actually warranted and that there are no life time or annual caps on expenditures.
- Ensure that those with pre-existing conditions are guaranteed affordable, quality healthcare coverage and access to medical care.
- Prevention services available to all in order to ensure a healthy population.
- Protect the essential benefits and provide funding to cover the costs.
- Community Clinics that focus on serving underserved populations must be fully funded.

#### **Medicare:**

Senior citizens depend on Medicare for their access to healthcare in our nation. These seniors have paid into this insurance program during their working years and are now collecting on that investment. A faithful budget will protect this cost effective program that helps our seniors stay healthy and able to pay their part of needed services. It is a promise made to them during their working years and this is a promise that must be kept.

Therefore a Faithful Budget will:

- Ensure that Medicare continues to provide quality affordable healthcare to seniors for coming generations. .
- Allow for negotiated rates for pharmaceuticals.

#### **Medicaid:**

The expansion of Medicaid to serve all people living in poverty was a critical feature of the ACA. The fact that 19 states have still refused to care for their people is shocking and counter to the teachings of our faiths. We call on Congress to expand Medicaid to all eligible residents of our nation and to maintain its funding mechanisms and structure. This is of critical importance to the following populations:

- Patients needing long term care. These patients rely on in home care and nursing homes for their daily functioning. It is a pro-life stance to fund these needs in our nation. In fact, Medicaid pays for more than 60% of all nursing home residents. It is an essential life line for these patients and must be ensured.
- Low income and disabled children and adults. Medicaid and the Children's Health Initiative Program (CHIP) together provide comprehensive coverage to children and adults with low incomes and people with disabilities.
- Senior citizens with low income supplement their Medicare health access with Medicaid. Together these two cover essential health benefits for our elder and disabled population.

#### **Targeted Programs:**

Our Health System currently contains numerous programs targeted to specific groups of people because of their specific needs. The Veterans Health System and Indian Health Service are notable examples of

this. A Faithful Budget will fully fund these programs, recognizing that failure to do so will shift their recipients into other programs which also require funding.

- Veterans health care has a strong needs-based component, giving priority to our veterans whose income does not afford them other health options.
- Veterans health care recognizes the unique nature of many health issues faced by servicemen and women who have been sent into combat on behalf of their country.
- The Indian Health Service maintains clinics and other services for many members of our Native American population. A Faithful Budget addresses their needs both in cities and rural areas.

#### **Research:**

A Faithful Budget will be forward looking, addressing not only the health care needs of today but the healthcare solutions of tomorrow. Adequately funded research leads to new approaches to promote and restore health, and will save lives; without adequate funding, these approaches and the impacted lives will be at risk. This includes research related to public health issues of the day, including:

- HIV/AIDS
- Ebola
- Malaria
- Vaccinations

## FAITHFUL BUDGET FOR A JUST NATION

### **Investing in the Restoration of People and Communities:**

Furthermore, the United States devotes extensive resources to imprisoning far more people than any other nation in the world. The millions of people who are directly impacted by this explosive rate of incarceration include families and communities of the incarcerated. Communities of color suffer an extensively under this system of mass incarceration. Today one in three black men can find themselves incarcerated.<sup>1</sup> In-prison educational and skills programs and post-incarceration re-entry programs are haphazard and often nonexistent, undermining public safety and making it extremely difficult for ex-offenders to become full, contributing members of society. Mass incarceration strains budgets and forces the Bureau of Prisons, in particular to rely on solitary confinement; often euphemistically called segregation or segregated housing. This is due to the lack of services or real rehabilitation programming for incarcerated peoples. Recently, the Attorney General fired the staff member hired to implement educational programs in federal prisons and has been ramping up enforcement strategies that will likely result in an even more strained system of prisons at the federal level with even less opportunity.

The Second Chance Reauthorization programs created in 2008 is authorized for up to \$165 million. These are vital programs that create an enormous return through expanded opportunity and reduced incarceration by providing community based nonprofits with resources to help returning citizens get back on their feet. The Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) has requested \$52 million for FY18. In 2016 the Bureau of Justice Assistance spent \$68 million. We should robustly fund these vital grant programs to help returning citizens regain their dignity and attain opportunity. Mass incarceration wastes \$80 billion a year nationally.

Preventing individuals from committing crimes and entering the criminal justice system at all is an obvious way to cut criminal justice costs. Accordingly, keeping individuals out of our criminal justice system is inevitably linked to wise investments in other “diversion” programs covered in this budget, including housing, health care, and education.

Juvenile justice programs to states help to fund diversionary programs that keep kids out of prison by providing holistic team-based approaches to developing minds. Keeping kids out of jail is the first step to reducing incarceration and stopping the recidivism before it starts. We should continue to fund and adequately resource the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Programs.

The President proposed to cut the Legal Services Corporation’s entire budget of \$385 million. This vital program helps to fund legal representation for civil litigants to mount a credible defense curing disputes such as eviction, veterans’ cases, or child custody cases among others. Indigent defense is important in the civil context as well as the criminal context. Poverty is at the root of crime and cutting programs that give needy Americans support will make our society even more unequal and crime-prone.

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<sup>1</sup> Shadow Report to the United Nations on Racial Disparities in the United States Criminal Justice System: The Sentencing Project, August 31, 2-13,  
<http://www.sentencingproject.org/publications/shadow-report-to-the-united-nations-human-rights-committee-regarding-racial-disparities-in-the- united-states-criminal-justice-system/>

**A Faithful Budget will:**

- Invest our tax dollars in evidence-based programs like education and skills development programs during and after prison that promote hope and change. Fund the Second Chance Reauthorization programs at the maximum levels up to the authorized \$120 million.
- Invest in juvenile justice grants. This will provide guidance to states to incentivize holistic, alternatives to incarceration. Kids deserve love and assistance to develop into productive members of society not pushed into criminality.
- Invest in indigent and civil defense to help needy Americans mount a real defense not merely be relegated to losing on technicalities. Failing to do so or cutting these services will result in higher costs through collateral problems and increased incarceration.

**Ceasing Funding for Programs Focused on Punishment:**

The United States imprisons far more people than any other nation in the world. So many federal rules carry criminal penalties that experts struggle to count them. The federal prison population has grown from approximately 25,000 in FY1980 to over 205,000 in FY2015. The enormous increase in incarceration over the past forty years has stretched the system beyond its limits and placed an unmanageable cost burden on taxpayers. From 1986 to 2006, the total justice expenditures -- federal, state, and local governments -- increased 301%, from \$54 billion to \$214 billion. High costs of incarceration are unsustainable in the long-term, let alone during times of economic downturn and tight budgets.

The privatization of prison construction incentivizes mass incarceration and consequently increases our already-skyrocketing criminal justice costs. In a March 1997 Securities and Exchange Commission filing, the Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) acknowledged that “the rate of construction of new facilities and the Company’s potential for growth will depend on several factors, including crime rates and sentencing patterns in the United States.” Thus, higher profits require more inmates. Since most private prisons operate on a per diem rate for each bed filled, there is a financial incentive to detain more inmates for longer periods of time. This incentive creates a dangerous entanglement between interest in profit and sound public policy.

The Federal Bureau of Prisons holds more than 11,000 prisoners in some form of segregation, including 400 in the federal super-max facility, the U.S. Penitentiary Administrative Maximum. Due to the high cost of constructing high security solitary confinement units and the increased number of staff required to run such units, holding prisoners in solitary confinement is significantly more expensive than keeping them in the general prison population. One study estimated that the average cost per cell of housing an inmate in a super-max prison is \$75,000, as opposed to \$25,000 for housing an inmate in the general prison population.

**A Faithful Budget will:**

- Cease investment in privatization of prison construction and management.

- Limit the expensive and destructive practice of solitary confinement (or “segregation”), in which prisoners are held alone in small cells for 23 hours per day and are permitted little or no social interaction for months or even years.
- Invest in humane alternatives that address the mental health needs of prisoners in a way that effectively contributes both to their rehabilitation and to their successful transition back into society