



SISTERS OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD  
**NATIONAL ADVOCACY CENTER**  
*Rise Up AND Act for Justice*

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## **Omnibus is Must-Pass But It's Missing a Lot**

*Statement by Fran Eskin-Royer*

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The failure of Congress to do its job in a deliberative manner has left us once again on the brink. We have a must-pass Omnibus bill as Members of Congress dash for the exit to make it home for Christmas.

Left on the floor, underfoot of the mad rush, are the hopes of migrants and their families. How and why did Congress fail to include hope for Dreamers who have languished for years and who know no home other than the United States of America? And how and why did Congress fail to provide permanent protections for Afghans who literally worked to protect the American people?

The National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd [NAC] urges Congress to amend the Omnibus bill to include a path to citizenship for DACA recipients and the Afghan Adjustment and Adoptee Citizenship Acts.

We also are distressed at the absence of an expanded Child Tax Credit in this vast 4,000 page bill. Every child deserves the resources they need to thrive. The Child Tax Credit is one of the most immediate, and effective tools we have to decrease child poverty. Millions of families across the country are struggling to put food on the table for their children -- especially in light of higher grocery and gas prices. Ensuring our children have food to eat is a moral imperative. We therefore call on Congress to make the Child Tax Credit fully and permanently available to low-income families through the Omnibus bill.

Another missing element from this legislative package is the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act that already passed the House and has the support of the vast majority of Senators and would promote healthy pregnancies and economic security for families. Not including this legislation as Christians prepare to remember the birth of Jesus Christ is an injustice that easily can be rectified before the Omnibus bill is passed into law.

Nonetheless, with all that is missing from the Omnibus bill, we still celebrate much that already has made it in. Most particularly we are gratified by the inclusion of multiple mental health provisions that will positively impact many Good Shepherd agencies and those people they serve.

After working with other advocacy organizations, NAC welcomes the addition of the Mainstreaming Addiction Treatment (MAT) Act that will reduce overdose deaths, increase treatment access and reduce stigma.

Also with our partners, we have been working with key Senate committees on a bi-partisan basis to develop and pass mental health provisions many of which are included in the Omnibus bill. According to the Senate Finance Committee, the Omnibus bill includes new Medicare coverage for marriage and family therapists and counselors. It also will help address the gaping hole of too few mental health workers. At Good Shepherd agencies across the country, the behavioral healthcare workforce shortage is making it incredibly difficult to provide individuals in need of treatment with adequate care. At Good Shepherd Services in New York City, for instance, there are simply not enough child and adolescent psychiatrists to meet the demand for treatment throughout the city. As a result, the wait times for treatment are far too long. With passage of this bill, we look forward to people being able to receive needed treatment more quickly and easily.

We only have a day or two left to improve this massive bill before voting begins. We urge Congress to do the right thing for those so often lost or forgotten.

*[The National Advocacy Center](#) educates and advocates on social justice issues for the transformation of society to the benefit of all people reflecting the spirituality, history and mission of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd. NAC advocates at the Federal level for people living in poverty, immigrants, survivors of human trafficking, survivors of domestic abuse, and other vulnerable populations.*

*The Sisters of the Good Shepherd was founded in France in 1835 and are in 70 countries on 5 continents and have had a presence in the United States for over 175 years. With a presence in 22 states and 1 U. S. Territory, the Sisters and their Lay Mission Partners have dedicated themselves to serving girls, women and families who experience poverty, exploitation, vulnerability and marginalization.*