



December 2, 2021

The Honorable Maria Cantwell  
511 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Cantwell,

We are writing to you about the Build Back Better Act, and to implore your help specifically on several areas of concern.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) is [supportive](#) of many of the provisions included in the Build Back Better Act, including in the areas of housing, family supports, the environment, and other provisions that will support the poor and vulnerable, and strengthen the social safety net.

At the same time, we are gravely concerned that the bill will lead to taxpayer funding of abortion in some of its health programs, and we are also concerned that the current provisions in the child care and universal pre-kindergarten sections will effectively exclude faith-based providers from those programs. Additionally, we urge you to advance legislation that provides undocumented persons with pathways to citizenship.

It is imperative that the Build Back Better Act be amended to ensure it will not threaten the lives of thousands of unborn children, consistent with the longstanding, bipartisan, and lifesaving Hyde Amendment that has been included in every health appropriations bill for 45 years. Specifically, while we recognize that a change was made to the latest version of the bill to attempt to exclude abortion from the health care services that are available to uncovered individuals in Medicaid non-expansion states in 2024 and 2025, this language is insufficient and must be clarified to ensure elective abortion coverage is not mandated or funded under the new arrangement. In addition, the latest text maintains the proposed health care affordability fund for states without Hyde protections and provides funding for several public health grants without Hyde protections.<sup>1</sup> This fundamental problem of expanded taxpayer funding of abortion in the Build Back Better Act must be remedied before the bill moves forward.

A separate area of concern in the Build Back Better Act is with the child care and pre-kindergarten programs. The current bill makes faith-based providers of child care and pre-kindergarten into recipients of federal financial assistance and attaches new and sweeping compliance obligations and non-discrimination provisions without religious exemptions. This is

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<sup>1</sup> These provisions can be found in Section 30601, Section 30602, respectively. The funding for public health grants without Hyde protections can be found in both the Energy and Commerce and Education and Labor sections of the bill.

an explicit departure from the status quo in federal early childhood care and will effectively exclude faith-based providers from these programs. Absent action to remedy this, the programs will severely limit the options for parents to choose the best environment for their children.

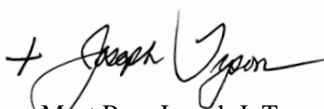
Finally, we strongly urge you to work to advance legislation that would promote the full integration of undocumented persons already living as Americans in principle by affording them legalization with a pathway to citizenship. The Build Back Better Act presents an opportunity to accomplish this, and we strongly urge you to support including provisions in this measure that would achieve this goal. At a minimum, we urge that you reject efforts to weaken or remove provisions in the House-passed bill that would provide these persons with temporary protection from removal and work authorization.

Thank you for your important work on behalf of our state and the country.

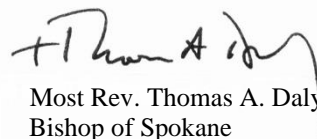
In the heart of Christ,



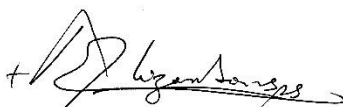
Most Rev. Paul D. Etienne  
Archbishop of Seattle



Most Rev. Joseph J. Tyson  
Bishop of Yakima



Most Rev. Thomas A. Daly  
Bishop of Spokane



Most Rev. Eusebio Elizondo, M.Sp.S.  
Auxiliary Bishop of Seattle