



May 25, 2010

Dear Senator,

Our religious traditions and scriptures affirm the inherent dignity of all human beings. All of us are called to help our brothers and sisters in need. Despite a slight increase in jobs created in the month of April unemployed workers living in poverty are still struggling to make ends meet. There are still scores of people who have been laid off and are unable to find employment. That is why we are writing you today to ask that you support the extension through the end of 2010 of emergency programs such as unemployment insurance (UI) and COBRA, along with the TANF Emergency Fund, found in *The American Jobs and Closing Tax Loopholes Act of 2010*. It is vital that Congress take steps to ensure that these programs are extended through the end of 2010. In addition, summer youth jobs programs should be adequately funded in order to stimulate job growth in an area that has been tremendously hit. In this time of economic crisis and high unemployment, we must step up and protect the most vulnerable among us.

Low-income and asset-poor families continue to be hit hardest during this recession because they lack the resources to weather the storm. The TANF Emergency Fund both creates subsidized jobs and provides cash assistance to those families in greatest need. UI and subsidized COBRA coverage ensure access to food, shelter, healthcare, medicine and other critical needs. With a national unemployment rate of 9.9 percent, these federal programs, which unemployed workers can access after they have exhausted the 26 weeks of state benefits, are critically important. Over 15.3 million workers are unemployed and a record 6.1 million have been unemployed for more than six months. UI provides a safety net for workers who are unable to find work in an economy where there is only one job opening for every 6.4 job seekers. These benefits determine whether a family falls deeper in to poverty or keeps its head above water.

In the past few months we have seen what happens if these critical programs are allowed to expire: unemployed workers and their families and communities ended up going through a period of unnecessary anguish, facing the end of unemployment insurance and subsidized COBRA coverage, when the extension of these benefits was blocked. Indeed, hundreds of thousands of unemployed workers did see their benefits lapse. The recession has exposed our nation's weaknesses and augmented families' need for assistance to crisis levels. We cannot neglect the very programs that allow many families to get by. Congress has the responsibility to take action by sufficiently funding emergency programs like UI, subsidized COBRA coverage, and the TANF Emergency Fund that many people rely on in a crisis.

We must do so not only because it is the right thing to do but because helping families get back on their feet is good for the economic strength of individual communities and for our nation as a whole. We can no longer leave states and millions of people wondering from month to month

whether or not their benefits or job will disappear. It is time to do the right thing and extend these benefits for the rest of the year. Please do so by supporting the extension through the end of 2010 of emergency programs such as unemployment insurance (UI) and COBRA, along with the TANF Emergency Fund , found in *The American Jobs and Closing Tax Loopholes Act of 2010*.

Sincerely,

Bread for the World
Church of the Brethren
The Episcopal Church
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Interfaith Worker Justice
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Lutheran Services in America
Mennonite Central Committee, Washington Office
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Council of Churches of Christ, USA
National Council of Jewish Women
NETWORK: A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Washington Office
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
The United Methodist Church-General Board of Church and Society
Union for Reform Judaism