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May 18, 2009

United States House of Representatives
Committee on Energy and Commerce
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, we welcome the consideration of *H. R. 2524, the American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009*. We also recognize the leadership of Chairmen Waxman and Markey in moving forward climate legislation in the Committee on Energy and Commerce. We are encouraged to see provisions in the legislation that protect the poor and vulnerable at home and abroad, but are quite concerned about the funding level for international adaptation. Addressing global climate change is both urgent and necessary and this legislation represents an important beginning.

For the United States Catholic bishops and for many others in the faith community, a fundamental moral measure of climate change legislation is how it affects the poor in our own country and around the world. This central priority reflects two moral requirements -- to care for creation and for "the least of these." As articulated in the bishops' statement, *Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence and the Common Good*:

Action to mitigate global climate change must be built upon a foundation of social and economic justice that does not put the poor [in our nation and around the world] at greater risk or place disproportionate and unfair burdens on developing nations.

We are generally supportive of the provisions within the legislation that can help ensure that low-income individuals and families in the U.S. are not disproportionately affected by any potential rise in energy prices resulting from the legislation. We will continue to support efforts to ensure that the means and vehicles for delivering these resources to those most in need are adequate and effective. In addition, we support measures that encourage and help not-for-profit, community and faith-based institutions, many of whom provide essential assistance to the poor, to become more energy efficient.

We are also supportive of the mechanisms put in place to provide adaptation assistance for vulnerable populations internationally. However, we are deeply disappointed that the funding resources committed to international adaptation fall fundamentally short of what is needed and the increase in available resources is pushed too far off into the future. We and our interreligious allies have advocated for a minimum of at least \$3.5 billion (3.5%) in the first year and a ramp up of funding levels at a faster pace to help people living in poverty adapt to the serious climate impacts already occurring around the world. This increase in funding is crucial to ensure that the international community can respond to the irreversible impacts of climate change that will devastate those living in poverty.

Catholic Relief Services is already experiencing the tragic consequences of climate change in the lives of people living in poverty. CRS, through its work in over 100 countries, is helping communities adapt to the consequences of climate change and mitigate its effects through health, agriculture, water, and emergency preparedness programs. Pope Benedict XVI in his 2008 World Youth Day address also drew attention to some of the dangers of climate change currently facing vulnerable nations, including “island nations whose very existence is threatened by rising water levels” and other “nations suffering the effects of devastating drought.”

For the United States to be credible in helping to lead negotiations for a new climate treaty, we urge that as the legislation moves forward, the amount allocated to international adaptation increase significantly at the outset and over time. This amount would help meet the initial needs of the most vulnerable developing nations and send a strong message of the U.S. commitment to securing a global treaty by providing a substantial down payment for international adaptation funding.

We understand that the current allocation reflects compromise and competing political priorities, but the House cannot leave the most vulnerable people without adequate help needed to protect their lives and livelihoods. For us, this is not a marginal matter, but rather a matter of moral priority and policy.

As the legislative process progresses, we look forward to working with you to increase funding for international adaptation assistance and taking a major step toward caring for creation and protecting “the least of these.”

Thank you for your attention to our concerns.

Sincerely yours,



Most Reverend Howard J. Hubbard
Bishop of Albany
Chairman,
Committee on International Justice and Peace



Ken Hackett
President
Catholic Relief Services

cc: Howard L. Berman, Chairman, House Committee on Foreign Affairs
Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Ranking Member, House Committee on Foreign Affairs