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December 10, 2021

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The Honorable Christopher Murphy
United States Senate
Senate Hart-136
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senator Murphy,

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

The Catholic Bishops of Connecticut are extremely concerned about a provision in the Build Back Better Act related to the expansion of funding for 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 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. We urge you to strengthen the language in this bill to insure faith-based providers, and the parents who choose to use these providers, will be able to fully participate in the expansion of these programs. *(Please see the attached memorandum which provides more details and potential solutions to each issue.)*

Additionally, we are very concerned that the bill will lead to federal taxpayer funding of abortion. 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.

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.

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.¹ This fundamental

¹ 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.

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problem of expanded taxpayer funding of abortion in the Build Back Better Act must be remedied before the bill moves forward.

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

Sincerely,

+ Leonard P. Blair

Most Reverend Leonard P. Blair
Archbishop of Hartford

+ Michael R. Cote

Most Reverend Michael R. Cote
Bishop of Norwich

+ Frank J. Caggiano

Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano
Bishop of Bridgeport

+ P. Chomnycky, OSBM

Most Reverend P. Paul Chomnycky, OSBM
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+ Juan Miguel Betancourt, SEMV

Most Reverend Juan Miguel Betancourt, SEMV
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