

Poverty in Hard Times

Ethical Perspective

- The common good needs to be considered in all deliberations and policy decisions
- Government responsibility for the common good includes a just sharing of resources and its responsibility for the general welfare includes protecting the most vulnerable.
- *Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of [themselves] and [their] family, including food, clothing, housing, and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond [their] control (UN Declaration of Human Rights, Article 25)*

Background

- Widespread unemployment and foreclosures have created increased demand for government services.
- Congregational and community ministries are the safety net beneath government safety net programs. Operating at capacity and having trouble meeting present needs, they see increasing numbers of the working poor.
- Most of the working poor barely make ends meet in good times. They are particularly hard hit by the recession. Wage cutbacks, fewer benefits, and job loss has affected many families.

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- The number of hungry children has increased because of the recession. Child nutrition programs like WIC, school breakfast and lunch programs and pre-school, summer and after-school meal programs are incredibly effective in reducing childhood hunger. But they can only be effective when they reach the children who need them.
- Programs such as COBRA (health care coverage) and Unemployment Insurance (UI) are vital for those going through hard times because of job loss.

Present Situation

- Tax credit programs (EITC & CTC) are effective anti-poverty programs. They now reach more low-income people than previously because of an extension passed in the stimulus bill. If the extension is allowed to expire, many will lose much or all of their child tax credit.
- The Child Nutrition Bill, which includes WIC and School Lunch and Breakfast programs, is due for reauthorization. Its Reauthorization will help increase access.
- Present unemployment rates are high. Employers are not hiring. Many workers now face long term unemployment and must rely on UI and COBRA for longer periods. With these programs only being extended on a month-to-month basis, they keep running out of these supports

What Would Help

- Extend tax credit expansions permanently.
- New investments of \$10 billion in child nutrition.
- Extend UI and COBRA until end of year.
(5/2010)

Member Denominations

American Baptist Churches, Episcopal Church, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Presbyterian Church (USA), Reformed Church in America, Religious Society of Friends, United Church of Christ, The United Methodist Church

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