

## **Chairman of U.S. Bishops' Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development Encourages Lawmakers in Providing Aid and Relief to Those Affected by Coronavirus**

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WASHINGTON— Archbishop Paul S. Coakley of Oklahoma City, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development, encouraged lawmakers as they consider measures to provide relief and aid to those suffering from coronavirus, as well as those affected by workplace closures and other disruptions. He also offered prayers for those suffering from the virus and for healthcare providers.

Archbishop Coakley's full statement follows:

“The outbreak of the coronavirus, or COVID-19, has impacted the lives of hundreds of millions around the world, and is spreading here in the United States. We pray especially for those who are ill and for those who have died. We also offer prayers for those affected by disruptions, such as quarantines and closures of workplaces and schools. Finally, we pray for health care workers, and express our gratitude for their service in combating this disease.

“At this time, lawmakers are considering with urgency a number of policies that could provide aid and relief. Because of the quickly developing nature of the situation, it is appropriate simply to offer encouragement to members of Congress and the Administration for their efforts to address the many challenges ahead. Special consideration is warranted for those most vulnerable: the poor, the elderly, the homeless, those in prison or detention facilities, immigrants and refugees, and those with severe underlying health conditions.

“Several of the policies under review have previously been supported by the bishops, such as increased food security measures, paid sick leave, adequate care for immigrants regardless of status, and greater assistance for low-income workers, the unemployed, and those experiencing homelessness or housing instability. In order to safeguard the health of all, everyone who is sick with the virus should have access to health care that is not a financial burden, whether or not they have insurance. Additional consideration is warranted for suspending work requirements related to programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), given likely workplace disruptions, making available additional federal funds potentially through a federal disaster declaration, refraining from immigration enforcement efforts at sensitive locations like hospitals and clinics, and additional resources for the Emergency Food and Shelter Program.

“We are grateful for the efforts by lawmakers during this difficult time and urge them to go forward in finding a path to bring greater relief to everyone suffering from coronavirus and its effects on society, especially those most in need. May the Divine Physician be with all those affected by this illness and restore us quickly to health and peace.”

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