



Interfaith Council for Peace & Justice

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Faith and Community Leaders Sign-On Letter for Human Services Funding

October 13, 2011

Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners,

As you conclude your budget deliberations, we the undersigned faith and community leaders want to thank you for your continued commitment to support funding for human services in our community. Given the current economic situation, the safety net for the most vulnerable members of our community has never been more insecure or more critical.

The need has never been greater. In the last decade, Washtenaw County's poverty rate has jumped from 11% to over 14%. Our unemployment rate in Michigan is over ten percent. Food Gatherers has seen a 138% increase in the number of families receiving emergency food since 2006. With so many of our residents struggling in this tough economy, it is wonderful to know that you agree that now is the wrong time to cut funding for services they depend on.

As other strands in the social safety net shred, the ones that remain become even more important. At the very time when more families rely on the social safety net to get back on their feet, these same programs face state and federal cuts. As Mary Jo Callan, Director of the Office of Community Development, reported to the Urban County Board, the federal government is planning significant cuts to the Community Development Block Grant and HOME Investment Program, and cuts to other programs are likely.

As you know, the State budget is cutting thousands of Michigan families from the support they receive through the Family Independence Program (FIP) and is making significant cuts to the Earned Income Tax Credit which is so important to low-income working families.

The world's moral and religious traditions share a call to care for the poor and vulnerable. While our varied ethical and religious traditions differ and disagree on some points, we overwhelmingly agree on the need to support those who are in need.

Maintaining the social safety net is good policy. We are fortunate to have community leaders who understand that maintaining human services funding is not just an ethical response to increased need, it is also sound public policy. Money invested in the social safety net saves money in the long-term by preventing more expensive responses such as prison or hospitalization, stabilizes property values by helping prevent eviction and foreclosure, and yields long-term tax revenue by helping people return to and advance in the workforce.

We recognize that you face difficult budget decisions, and we are grateful for your initial decision to

avoid the devastating effects that could come from cutting funds to the most crucial support programs, such as those for children, people with mental illnesses, and the poor.

As faith and community leaders, we thank you and urge your continued support and protection of the safety net that sustains the populations with the most need. It is at the core of who we are as people and our values of caring for every person.

Thank you for the work you are already doing. We are so fortunate to know that we can rely on your willingness to take leadership on these issues.

Sincerely,

Charles Warpehoski, Director, Interfaith Council for Peace and Justice
Reverend Dr. Susan McGarry, Rector, St. Aidan's Episcopal Church
Reverend Ruth Strang M.D, Priest, St. Aidan's Episcopal Church
Lamia Sharmeen, Sisters Committee Chair, Ann Arbor Islamic Center
Jim Toy, Secretary, Oasis TBLG Outreach Ministry
Rabbi Robert Dobrusin, Rabbi, Beth Israel Congregation Ann Arbor, MI
Dr. Bruce D. Martin, Director, Ecumenical Center & International Residence
Reverend Jeffery D. Harrold, Pastor, New Beginnings Community Church
Reverend Maymette E. Dolberry, Reverend, Brown Chapel AME Church
Reverend John Groen, Pastor, Ann Arbor Christian Reformed Church
Reverend Lewis W. Towler, Father, St Andrews Episcopal Church
Abubakr Amin, Outreach Chair, Muslim Community Association
Reverend Rey Mondragon, Reverend, Ypsilanti First United Methodist Church
Marian Laughlin, Board member, Religious Action for Ann Arbor Housing
Reverend Kit Fuller, Reverend, Samaritan Counseling Services
Mary Schlitt, Director of Development, Food Gatherers
Pam Smith, Executive Director, Child Care Network
Paul D. Sher, Managing Attorney, Legal Services of South Central Michigan
Brian Durrance, Secretary, Mission
Peri Stone-Palmquist, Board Member/Program Manager, Board Member of SOS Community Services, Program Manager of Education Project for Homeless Youth
Kristin Johnson, DDS, Board Member, Ozone House
Denise Tanguay, Board Member, SOS Community Services
David Hartmann, President, BOD, Ozone House
Denese S. Brown, Executive Director, POWER Inc.
Reverend Daniel Reim, S.J., Catholic Priest, Chicago Detroit Province of the Society of Jesus
Glenna Frank Miller, Board Member, SOS Community Services
Brodie Remington, Board Member, Ozone House, Ozone House
Ethel Lee, Emeritus Board Member, Ozone House
Mary Anne Perrone, Member, Interfaith Council for Peace & Justice
Susan Beckett, Publisher and Board Chair, Groundcover News
Veronica Sanitate, Board of Directors, Groundcover News
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Robert Milstein, Member, Temple Beth Emeth Social Action
Eleyne Levitt, Ms., Retired. Temple Beth Emeth Social Action
Reverend Ken Wilson, Senior Pastor, Vineyard Church of Ann Arbor

Max Heirich, Elder, Ann Arbor Friends Meeting (Quaker)
Rebecca Hoort, Congregant, First Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Ann Arbor
Lauren Zinn, Reverend, Zinnhouse
Mary C. Browning, Treasurer, Religious Action for Affordable Housing (RAAH)
Scott Wright, Service + Justice Outreach Coordinator, St. Francis of Assisi, Catholic Church
Amy Rosenberg, Member, Reconstructionist Havurah of Ann Arbor
Matt Keefe, Social Justice Team, Northside Presbyterian
Benita Kaimowitz, Social Action Committee, Temple Beth Emeth
Annie Kopko, Reverend, Interfaith Center for Spiritual Growth
Emily Swan, Pastor, Vineyard Church of Ann Arbor
Barbara Niess May, Executive Director, SafeHouse Center
Bill Riccobono, Clerk, Ann Arbor Friends Meeting (Quakers)
Reverend Robert Livingston, Senior Minister, First Congregational Church of Ann Arbor
Lucia Heinold, Member Challenging Racism, First Unitarian Universalist of Ann Arbor
Joyce Deren, Board Member, Religious Action for Ann Arbor Housing
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Bill Alt, Program Coordinator, Interfaith Council of Peace and Justice
Andrew Fre, Commissioner, Church in Society, Church of the Good Shepherd United Church of Christ
Reverend Coqui Conkey, Pastor, Church of the Good Shepherd
Reverend Joseph Summers, Vicar, Episcopal Church of the Incarnation
Missy Orge, Chief Program Officer, Food Gatherers
Reverend Ian Reed Twiss, Pastor, Holy Faith Church
Reverend Barbara S. Fuller, Co-Founder, Interfaith Council for Peace and Justice
Reverend Michael Ryan, Pastor, Kings Lutheran Church
Reverend Russell M. Fuller, Pastor Emeritus, Memorial Christian Church
Ms. Angela Williams, Member, Religious Action for Ann Arbor Housing
Dr. Charles Williams, Member, Religious Action for Ann Arbor Housing
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Reverend Rod Henderson, Senior Druid, Shining Lakes Grove, ADF
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Mary Bartkowiak, Secretary, St. Aidan's Episcopal Church
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Reverend Jeanne Hansknecht, Curate, St. Andrew's Episcopal Church
Reverend Svea Gray, Deacon, St. Andrew's Episcopal Church
Reverend JoAnn Kennedy Slater, Rector, St. Luke's Episcopal Church Diocese of MI
Fran Board, Vestry Member, St. Aidan's Episcopal church
Reverend Dr. Fran Mayes, Reverend Dr., Tree of Life MCC
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Daniel A. Rubenstein, Development Director, The Family Learning Institute

**Organization affiliation for identification purposes only.*