



United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

3211 FOURTH STREET NE • WASHINGTON DC 20017-1194 • 202-541-3000
WEBSITE: WWW.USCCB.ORG • FAX 202-541-3339

October 27, 2023

The Honorable Sherrod Brown
503 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bill Cassidy
455 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Brian Higgins
2269 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Brian Fitzpatrick
271 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Brown, Senator Cassidy, Representative Higgins, and Representative Fitzpatrick:

On behalf of the Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development and the Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), we write in support of the SSI Savings Penalty Elimination Act (S. 2767/H.R. 5408). This legislation will provide an overdue update to the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program's asset limits by adjusting the amount of money SSI recipients are allowed to save for the first time in decades, indexing to inflation, and eliminating the marriage penalty.

The U.S. bishops have long advocated that society should help to ensure a minimum level of security for workers, their families, and persons with disabilities.¹ The basic income security offered by SSI helps to do just that. SSI recipients are some of our most vulnerable neighbors – persons who are aged, blind, or disabled and have limited income and resources. Our concern is always with the most vulnerable, which makes the SSI program one of special importance. We must do all we can to strengthen it, so it better meets the needs of those who rely on it for a decent standard of living.

Current asset limits in the SSI program create a barrier to financial security. They take away the incentive and ability for SSI recipients to build savings, prevent some low-income individuals who are unable to work from becoming eligible for SSI and cause others to lose access to SSI benefits. Raising SSI's asset limits can increase stability for recipients and help them live in dignity. Furthermore, ensuring that the asset limits keep up with inflation allows the program to be responsive to current economic conditions. In addition to being too low, current SSI asset limits create an economic penalty for marriage. Removing financial disincentives to marriage benefits family formation and well-being. It is encouraging to see this addressed in this bill.

We encourage you to continue working towards the goal to ensure adequate support for SSI participants and to continue to address marriage penalties in the program, without leaving anyone worse off. The SSI Savings Penalty Elimination Act is a significant step in the right direction. We stand ready to support you moving this forward.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Most Rev. Borys Gudziak in blue ink.

Most Rev. Borys Gudziak
Archbishop of Ukrainian Catholic
Archeparchy of Philadelphia
Chairman, Committee on Domestic Justice
and Human Development

Handwritten signature of Most Rev. Robert E. Barron in black ink.

Most Rev. Robert E. Barron
Bishop of Winona-Rochester
Chairman, Committee on Laity, Marriage,
Family Life and Youth

¹ Administrative Board of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, [A Statement to All Generations: Social Security and the Common Good](#), March 1999.