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A single mother poses with her child in this 2016 file photo from Brazil.

A single mother poses with her child in this 2016 file photo from Brazil. (CNS photo/Ricardo Moraes, Reuters)



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Calling upon Congress for "radical solidarity" with mothers and babies -- both born and unborn -- four bishops advanced an ambitious legislative and policy agenda that prioritizes the well-being of families in a letter to lawmakers.

The measures proposed by the chairmen of four U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' committees detail a "vision for an authentically life-affirming society."

Dated Oct. 26, the letter explained that following the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in June that reversed the court's 1973 Roe v. Wade decision that legalized abortion, there is an opportunity to "redouble efforts toward a culture of life that respects and supports the dignity of every person at every stage."

Describing the court's decision as "extraordinary," the bishops said that the work to support families must be widened.

"We are praying and working for changes in hearts and minds, circumstances and policy, that will help everyone to treasure each and every fellow human being in a society oriented to supporting children and their parents," the letter said.

"In other words, we hope for the day when abortion is unthinkable because society has successfully reckoned with the challenges of raising children in the modern world and has decided to make the full flourishing of children and their families the highest goal, without anyone being exclude," it said.

The letter was sent to all members of Congress by Oklahoma City Archbishop Paul S. Coakley of the Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development; Baltimore Archbishop William E. Lori of the Committee on Pro-Life Activities; San Francisco Archbishop Salvatore J. Cordileone of the Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth; and Washington Auxiliary Bishop Mario E. Dorsonville of the Committee on Migration.

Specifically, the bishops outlined 15 measures that they said they have long supported. They include passage of the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act and the PUMP for Nursing Mothers Act, extending the child tax credit, support for pregnancy resource centers, and ending marriage penalties in tax policy and social programs.

Other provisions the bishops urged Congress to act upon relate to paid family leave, child care and prekindergarten programs, nutrition, education, maternal and child health, housing, domestic violence and family relationships, adoption support, environmental policies to ensure the health of women and children, and lifting limits on the eligibility of immigrant and mixed-status families in accessing government programs.

"There are serious cultural, social, economic and spiritual challenges that face women, families and children today. These are challenges that concern the common good," the bishops wrote.

They emphasized that children should not grow up in poverty and that parents should be able to take time away from work to care for them. They also said affordable health care for moms and children is necessary and that workplace polices should respect pregnant and nursing mothers.

The bishops are calling for affordable and high quality day care as well as an end to childhood hunger and homelessness and to toxic chemicals causing defects or cancer. They also said immigrant families need to be "treated in accord with their inviolable dignity."

"All of these goals require the cooperation of all and the exclusion of none," they added.

The letter said these goals cannot be achieved by individual efforts and will require collaborative work on the part of government leaders.

The bishops urged members of Congress "to find bipartisan solutions and ensure that these and other similar legislative proposals are given high priority."

"We hope with a particular concern that we all can agree on coming to the aid of pregnant and single parenting women in need, so that they will have the support, comfort, and hope that they require to build their lives for the better and realize their aspirations," the bishops wrote.