

EVANGELICAL IMMIGRATION table.

Bethany Christian Services

Council for Christian Colleges and Universities

Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention

Faith and Community Empowerment

National Association of Evangelicals

National Latino Evangelical Coalition

The Wesleyan Church

World Relief

December 18, 2020

Dear Members of Congress,

As the Congress negotiates a relief package to assist Americans facing economic hardship as the result of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are writing to urge you to ensure that such legislation does nothing to penalize American citizens because they are married.

The CARES Act's provision of cash payments was a significant help to many Americans. However, U.S. citizens who jointly file their tax returns with a husband or wife who has an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) – which is issued by the IRS to taxpayers who are ineligible for various reasons for a Social Security Number – were excluded from these direct payments in most cases, as were these couples' children.

As a new round of direct payments are considered in the current negotiations, we believe that no Americans should be penalized because they have gotten married. Under the CARES Act, an estimated 1.4 million U.S. citizens and lawfully present immigrants were ineligible for this assistance because they jointly filed their taxes with a spouse. Had they chosen to cohabitate unmarried with or even divorce that partner, they would have qualified, which creates a penalty against marriage that should not be the public policy of the United States government.

As Christians who believe God has ordained marriage and that public policies should not deter people from the institution, we urge you to ensure that any direct payment for Americans in this relief package being negotiated include citizens married to individuals who file taxes with an ITIN.

Sincerely,

Principals of the Evangelical Immigration Table:

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Shirley V. Hoogstra, President, Council for Christian Colleges and Universities

Hyepin Im, President & CEO, Faith and Community Empowerment

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The Evangelical Immigration Table www.EvangelicalImmigrationTable.com

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