

WORK & FAMILY IN A NEW REALITY

POLICIES TO SAFEGUARD WORKERS AND WORKPLACES

March 20, 2020

Many of Americans' work and family lives have been turned upside down. Across the nation, homes have rapidly turned into schools, schools are becoming food distribution sites, and work is broadcast into living rooms via video calls and conferences. The already thinning boundaries between the domestic and the public sphere may disappear or be radically changed by the COVID-19 crisis. As policymakers make crucial decisions in the coming days, weeks, and months, they should ground their policies in three key principles.

Principles to Guide Policymakers

- **Dignity of All Workers:** Time for family care should not be a privilege for a few, but a pervasive practice that reflects the dignity of all workers.
- **Practical Support:** Assistance to workers should effectively empower all families to care for each other well.
- **Support Economic Vitality:** Policies should support healthy businesses, nonprofits, and faith-based organizations.

Policy Recommendations

- **Mitigate the hardship that will follow as work radically changes for many families.** Emergency paid sick and family leave policies are critical for those who cannot or should not work right now to stay home, recover, and care for children. Unemployment insurance will also be crucial for households who will be out of work due to the recession.
- **Alleviate expected economic hardship for faith-based organizations and their employees.** There's a risk that emergency policies create unintended burdens for religious employers or exclude them. Safeguarding the sacred sector means finding ways to make sure faith-based organizations and their employees are protected.
- **Empower faith-based organizations to contribute to the social safety net while preserving their religious freedom.** The sacred sector is integral to administering the social safety net. In increasing funding of safety net policies and programs, the government must not undermine the religious identity and mission of these vital civil society institutions.
- **Incentivize charitable giving in this time of economic and social crisis.** In the current emergency, Congress should enact a universal charitable deduction that gives a deduction on taxes owed to all taxpayers who contribute to the charitable sector.