

FACTSHEET

BUILD BACK BETTER ACT (H.R. 5376)

A BILL THAT HONORS THE INHERENT DIGNITY AND WORTH OF OUR FAMILIES AND OUR COMMUNITIES

THE CHALLENGE

The Build Back Better Act (H.R. 5376)¹ is a historic restorative opportunity for our rural, urban, and suburban communities that have been devastated by COVID-19's impact and decades of being under-resourced and under-served.

From health care to housing to child care to our environment, Congress can help Americans across the country to thrive, regardless of who they voted for, what they look like, or where they live. This bill would provide families and individuals with the resources necessary to help enable them to thrive and actualize their full potential as beloved children of God made in the imago Dei—the image of God.

To help better understand the benefits of this legislation, Sojourners has designed this fact sheet that highlights major provisions of the bill and what they will mean for millions of Americans.

REPAIRING THE BREACH

The United States is long overdue for investments that address problems and grievances that have plagued the nation for generations. Many of our issues are being exacerbated by our current COVID-19 crisis, and we know that our rural, urban, and suburban areas cannot continue to wait for Congress to act.

Data shows that 1 in 7 Americans may have family resources below the poverty threshold of \$12,880 annually or about \$35 daily. Further, more than 1 in 4 households—including more than 1 in 3 households with children and 1 in 2 Black and Latino households with children—experienced a major hardship such as an inability to afford adequate food, housing, or utilities over a three-year period prior to the pandemic.²

We know that our country's issues are driven by decades of underinvestment in families and communities in ways that perpetuate socioeconomic, racial, ethnic, and cultural disparities. For example, in 2017, Congress enacted historic tax cuts for the rich and major corporations that inflated our deficit by over one trillion dollars. Since then, Americans in rural, urban, and suburban areas have struggled to make ends meet while surviving a deadly pandemic.

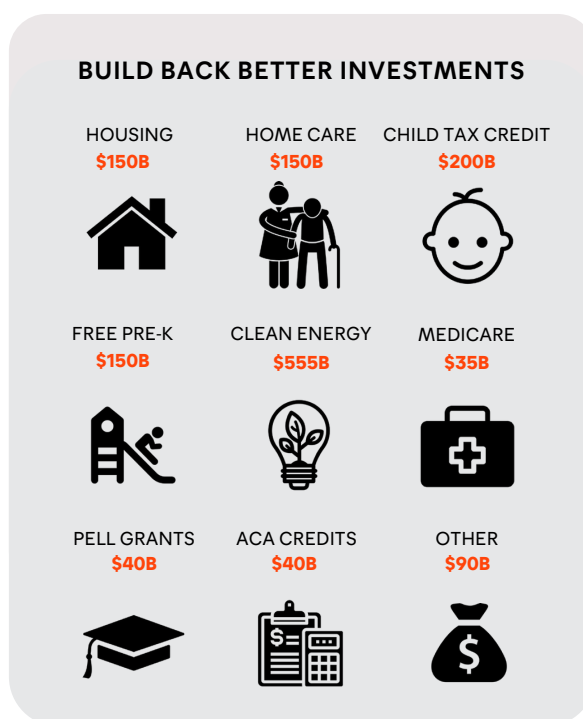
PRO-FAMILY, PRO-CHILDREN SUPPORTS

Sojourners believes politicians have a duty to support and pass pro-family policies that ensure parents and caregivers have the resources and supports necessary to raise healthy children. Our faith tells us we must act to help families struggling to afford the growing cost of raising children and attend to the needs of older Americans and Americans with disabilities who cannot access affordable home care. Passing the Build Back Better Act (BBBA) would be a historic and transformative investment in children and caregiving that would lower costs of living and set a durable foundation for our future.

In particular, the **House-passed version of the BBBA includes game-changing supports for families and children.** The legislation will save most American families more than half of their spending on child care, deliver two years of free preschool for every 3- and 4-year-old in America, and give more than 35 million families a major tax cut by providing up to \$3,600 (or \$300 per month) in tax cuts per child by extending the American Rescue Plan's expanded Child Tax Credit (CTC).

Importantly, parents will be able to send children to high-quality preschool in the setting of their choice—from public schools to child care providers to Head Start.³

States will be able to expand access to high-quality, affordable child care to about 20 million children per year—covering 9 out of 10 families across the country with young children.⁴ Better access to high-quality child care can increase the likelihood that parents, especially mothers, are employed or enrolled in education and training beyond high school, while also providing lifelong benefits for children, especially those who are economically under-served.



RURAL COMMUNITIES

Rural communities are present in the North, South, East, and West and are part of the backbone of this country. **These communities have faced enormous demographic, regional, and economic changes that present unique challenges to the individuals and families who call them home.**⁵ Elected officials have a duty to craft policies that support rural needs.

Rural America will benefit from pro-children and families supports such as universal pre-k and the expanded Child Tax Credit. In addition, the **Build Back Better Act includes many provisions that would mitigate climate change, improve quality of life in rural communities, and commit millions of dollars to agricultural education across the country.**⁶

For example, the House-passed version includes **\$18 billion in rural job-promoting investments to ensure those living in rural America and on tribal lands have access to clean water and reliable and efficient renewable energy.** If passed, these communities would also see \$12 billion in critical debt relief for farmers in need, including supports for the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to tailor its programs to support new and existing farmers through outreach, education, and technical assistance.

Build Back Better also addresses rural economic and racial parity. The bill currently includes \$1 billion for the new Rural Partnership Program. This program will provide flexible grant funding for rural communities to support job growth, build economic resilience, and aid economic recovery in places impacted by economic transitions and climate change. In addition, \$750 million has been set aside for financial assistance for farmers and ranchers who have experienced discrimination in USDA farm lending programs.

Finally, once passed, the BBBA will address the needs of 4 million uninsured or underinsured individuals—largely in the rural South—by **expanding Medicaid in the twelve remaining holdout states**. The public health program is partially funded by the federal government and run by state health finance departments. The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA) (P.L. 111-148) expanded Medicaid accessibility by broadening eligibility, which allowed states to enroll more people. Unfortunately, twelve states have refused to expand Medicaid since the measure passed in 2010, which has harmed the health and well-being of millions. Under this law, the federal government would provide subsidized coverage through the federal health insurance marketplace for individuals with income under 138% of the federal poverty level. **This access could be both life-changing and life-saving for many in the 15.4 percent of the U.S. rural population living in poverty.**⁷

SUPPORTS FOR DREAMERS, TPS HOLDERS, AND UNDOCUMENTED WORKERS

Build Back Better includes several immigration provisions that, if maintained in the Senate, represent a step forward in honoring immigrant communities.⁸ Current language would provide temporary protections and work permits to undocumented Americans while also expediting a pathway to green cards through a visa recapture program. **This program would recapture unused visa numbers for family- and employment-based green card applicants, creating a pathway to citizenship for up to 400,000 people.**⁹ It also includes funding to enhance green card processing and reduce the backlog.

Education beyond high school is increasingly important for economic growth and competitiveness in the 21st century, even as it has become unaffordable for too many families.¹⁰ The Build Back Better Act will make education beyond high school—including training for high-paying jobs available now—more affordable. Specifically, the BBBA will increase the maximum Pell Grant by \$550 for more than 5 million students enrolled in public and private non-profit colleges and expand access for DREAMers.

ECONOMIC JUSTICE FOR ALL AMERICANS

Sojourners strongly believes in the necessity of combatting economic injustice and systemic racism. A moral budget must require corporations and the wealthy to pay their fair share to create a fairer tax system, reduce inequality, and help sustain funding for critical programs. Out-dated and missing infrastructure, including human infrastructure, disproportionately impacts communities of color. Bold investment in our shared future will create conditions in which everyone can thrive.

Build Back Better represents a chance for elected officials to prioritize the needs of the under-served and under-resourced.^{11,12} That is why it is largely paid for by ensuring that the wealthiest contribute their fair share. Specifically, the bill will invest in overhauling tax administration, so the **wealthy finally pay what they owe instead of hiding their income from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS)**¹⁰ Regular workers pay the taxes they owe on their wages and salaries—with a 99 percent compliance rate—and the wealthy should be held to the same standard.

The bill would require the wealthiest .03 percent of Americans to pay a surtax on their millions and billions.¹⁰ It would also close a loophole that allows wealthy taxpayers to avoid paying the Medicare tax on their earnings—leaving everyday Americans to shoulder the burden.

Corporations would no longer be allowed to avoid taxes by shifting profits out-of-country where there may be lower taxes.¹³ In making a few slight changes to tax law for the wealthy and corporations, Build Back Better would raise a reported \$1.85 trillion over ten years to pay for the family and community investments included in the legislation. This is a key step forward in making our economy more just for all Americans, whether they were born into or acquired wealth or not.

HOW TO HELP

Build Back Better represents a chance for elected officials to prioritize the needs of the under-served and under-resourced. This legislation is America's chance to show her citizens how much they matter, regardless of who they voted for, what they look like, or where they live. From housing to health care to child care to caring for our Earth, Sojourners believes this bill has the potential to bring good news to people and communities across America.

Americans are closely watching how Members of Congress respond in this moment. Families and faith communities need them to legislate and help us recover, repair, and rebuild, especially as we continue to battle the COVID-19 pandemic. If you would like to take action to help see this bill passed, **please visit here to call and tell your Senator to pass the Build Back Better Act now!**



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