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USCCB Chairmen and NCEA President Welcome Bipartisan, Bicameral Agreement Reached To Reform Child Care & Development Block Grant Program

September 15, 2014

WASHINGTON—The chairmen of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) Committee on Catholic Education, Archbishop George J. Lucas of Omaha, Nebraska; the Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development, Archbishop Thomas G. Wenski of Miami; and the President of the National Catholic Education Association (NCEA), Brother Robert Bimonte, welcome the legislative agreement reached by a bipartisan group of House and Senate leaders on Friday to improve and reauthorize the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act.

The Child Care and Development Block Grant Act (CCDBG) provides funds to states to assist low-income families or those receiving assistance, in obtaining child care while parents work or participate in educational job training. A vast majority of recipients who receive CCDBG support do so through certificates which allow parents to choose the child care provider and program of their choice. The program has not been reauthorized since 1996.

“This is wonderful news and a testament to what can be achieved when we put the needs of parents and children first,” Archbishop Lucas said. “This legislative agreement also appropriately reaffirms the importance and pre-eminence of the child care certificates as the bedrock parental choice component of the program and acknowledges the critical role that Catholic and other faith-based providers play in this program.”

“The members of Congress, in this agreement, strengthen a program that has worked well over the last two decades and continues to provide low-income working families with the child care assistance they need, from the provider they choose. Child care is increasingly important for family stability, as well as finding and keeping decent work,” said Archbishop Thomas G. Wenski, chairman of the Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development.

“The success of the CCDBG program and the flexibility it provides to low-income families to choose the child-care program which best fits their needs is a reminder that empowering parents not only supports them in their role as primary educators of their children but also provides them with the assistance necessary to find employment and support their families,” said Brother Robert Bimonte, President of the National Catholic Education Association.

The U.S. Congress is expected to consider the measure in the coming days. According to the joint press release by Representatives John Kline (R-MN), George Miller (D-CA), Todd Rokita (R-IN) and David Loebsack (D-IA) and Senators Tom Harkin (D-IA), Lamar Alexander (R-TN), Barbara Mikulski (D-MD), and Richard Burr (R-NC), the bill enhances parental choice in child care options, strengthens health and safety standards and improves the quality of care in child care programs.

Keywords: USCCB, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Congress, House of Representatives, Senate, Archbishop George J. Lucas, Brother Robert Bimonte, Bishop Thomas Wenski, The Child Care and Development Block Grant Act, CCDBG, National Catholic Education Association

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