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AAJC

March 19, 2024

Dear Member of Congress,

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, a coalition charged by its diverse membership of more than 240 national organizations to promote and protect the civil and human rights of all persons in the United States, we write to share our updated topline legislative priorities for the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress.

For 74 years, The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights has led efforts to achieve the coalition's shared vision of an America as good in practice as it is in promise. Together with our [11 task forces](#), we have identified and developed executive and legislative priorities for this Congress that represent a path forward for our country in advancing social and economic justice.

Our task forces are largely composed of coalition members with expertise in each issue area featured in this document, which includes census, education, employment, fair courts, fair housing and lending, hate and bias, health care, immigration, justice reform, media and telecommunications, and voting rights. Our task forces and staff have worked to develop a shared agenda that prioritizes civil and human rights for the current administration and the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress.

Our priorities are organized by task force and are presented alphabetically, not in order of urgency or importance. Similarly, the initiatives within each subject matter area are not ranked in order of importance but are equally of concern to the relevant task force. Finally, the priorities do not reflect the views of any one person or organization, or the full agenda for all of our organizations, but rather reflect our coalition's shared interests developed over the past several months.

We believe these priorities should be met by the administration and 118<sup>th</sup> Congress, and we are eager to engage with you to achieve them. Thank you in advance for your consideration, and we welcome your partnership.

Sincerely,

Maya Wiley  
President & CEO

Jesselyn McCurdy  
Executive Vice President of Government Affairs

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## **The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights Top Task Force Priorities for 118<sup>th</sup> Congress, Second Session**

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, a coalition of more than 240 national civil and human rights advocacy organizations, presents our coalition's updated topline priorities for the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress. The list of priorities below, while far from exhaustive, represents the most important issue areas and action items — in some cases, long overdue — identified by The Leadership Conference's 11 task forces.

### **Cross-Cutting**

- Pass the Equality Act.
- Pass legislation expanding the Child Tax Credit.
- Build on the administration's AI Bill of Rights and AI executive order by passing legislation to mitigate the harms caused by artificial intelligence through impact assessments, monitoring, and other requirements to ensure that the technology is safe, equitable, and effective.
- Advocate for congressional, executive branch, and judicial personnel who prioritize racial equity and inclusion and accessibility in policymaking broadly and civil rights specifically.

### **Census**

- Ensure adequate appropriations for the Census Bureau so that the agency can: 1) conduct research and develop strategies to address, ameliorate, and eliminate persistent differential undercounts in the decennial census, including developing effective methods/methodology to minimize/eliminate duplicate responses; 2) enhance data quality in all census data products, including the American Community Survey and population estimates; and 3) prepare for a fair and accurate 2030 Census.
- Increase oversight of the Census Bureau to: 1) understand the causes of persistent differential undercounts, as well as plans to ensure a fair and accurate 2030 Census; 2) uplift the importance of Population Estimates and the American Community Survey; and 3) assist in the development of future legislation to strengthen the Census Bureau and update its authorizing statute.

### **Education**

- Provide the appropriations needed to double the size of the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights and to enable equitable access to high quality early care and education, K12 public schools, and higher education.
- Pass legislation to protect civil rights and advance equity in early care and education, K12 school climates, and higher education consistent with Civil Rights Principles for [Early Care and Education](#); [Multilingual Learner Education](#); [Safe, Healthy, and Inclusive School Climates](#); and [Higher Education](#).

### **Employment**

- Further the momentum on paid family and medical leave by 1) including funding for state paid leave research, evaluation, and implementation grants in FY2024 appropriations; and 2) continuing to gather information on evidence-based best practices for paid leave.

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- Pass appropriations bills that increase funding for Department of Labor, particularly its enforcement agencies, including the Solicitor of Labor, the National Labor Relations Board, and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

### **Fair Courts**

- The White House and Senate leadership must make it an immediate and enduring priority to fill all federal lower court vacancies, with a particular focus on vacancies in Southern and Midwestern states, and a Supreme Court vacancy should one arise. These vacancies must be filled with individuals who have a demonstrated commitment to civil and human rights, possess diverse professional experiences including public interest work for social and economic justice, are fair-minded, possess a progressive vision of the law and Constitution, and are reflective and representative of the vast and rich diversity of our country. This diversity includes race, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability status, ethnicity, national origin, socio-economic status, and experiential and professional background.
- Congress must maintain oversight over the federal judiciary and pass legislation that modernizes and reforms our courts, including legislation that strengthens an enforceable ethical code of conduct for all federal judges, including all Supreme Court justices, and enacts transparency measures and court structure reforms such as expanding the number of authorized judgeships for circuit and district courts. In addition, Congress must consider other structural reforms to the Supreme Court.

### **Fair Housing & Lending**

- Significantly expand funding for the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity, the Fair Housing Initiatives Program, and the Fair Housing Assistance Program, and oppose any appropriations riders that would undermine Fair Housing Act rulemakings or enforcement.
- Pass legislation to reform the nation's home appraisal industry, which for decades has lowballed home valuations in communities of color and widened the nation's racial wealth gap.
- Pass comprehensive legislation to address housing cost inflation that includes first generation downpayment assistance, expanded rental assistance, and support for the housing needs of people with disabilities and Native communities.

### **Fighting Hate & Bias**

- Pass the bipartisan Improving Reporting to Prevent Hate Act, which would require law enforcement agencies in jurisdictions with over 100,000 people to credibly report hate crimes to be eligible for federal funding under the Safe Streets Act.

### **Health Care**

- Expand and improve eligibility, affordability, and access to services for all public health programs and reduce institutional bias; adequately fund all administering agencies; oppose all poison pill riders that would limit access to health care for vulnerable populations; and ensure continued enhanced funding for premium tax credits (PTCs) and home and community-based services (HCBS).

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- Promote civil rights principles, protect against discrimination in health care, and reduce health disparities by requiring collection and disaggregation of comprehensive demographic data; providing for language and communication access for limited English proficient individuals and people with disabilities; ensuring access for all to gender affirming care and abortion, reproductive, and maternal health care; and providing the Department of Health and Human Services' Office for Civil Rights sufficient funding to implement and enforce civil rights laws.

### **Immigration**

- Reject any legislation that would place further restrictions on asylum eligibility, reinstate Title 42 expulsion policies, expand border wall construction, further criminalize violations of civil immigration laws, increase the use of detention, or require employers to use a highly flawed electronic database to verify employee eligibility.

### **Justice Reform**

- Pass the People's Response Act establishing a Division on Community Safety within the Department of Health and Human Services.
- Support the full implementation of the Biden administration's executive order on policing, including meaningful inclusion of law enforcement in AI regulations.
- Ensure transparency and accountability in any law enforcement appropriations.

### **Media & Telecommunications**

- Extend the Affordable Connectivity Program, either through a supplemental appropriation or through the Affordable Connectivity Program Extension Act of 2024.
- Pass comprehensive federal consumer privacy legislation that provides protections for personal data and civil rights, addresses the civil rights impacts of artificial intelligence, and does not jeopardize content moderation. Legislation should include increased appropriations for federal regulators to adequately fulfill this mission.

### **Voting Rights**

- Pass the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act to protect against discriminatory actions and restore and strengthen the Voting Rights Act.
- Pass the Freedom to Vote Act to provide national standards and other baseline reforms to improve voting access for all Americans.
- Pass the Native American Voting Rights Act to provide equitable access to voting and registration opportunities on Indian lands.