

“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute.  
Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.”  
Proverbs 31:8-9

Honored Legislators and Governor Fallin,

We the undersigned religious leaders recognize that it is a difficult time in our state and we acknowledge the burden of office that you bear in the midst of such a severe budget crisis. We are aware that there are currently many different plans for contending with the budget, and as religious leaders we feel compelled by the teachings of our faiths to remind you that every budget decision has human and moral implications.

We ask that you make decisions on the moral principle of attending to the poor and vulnerable. Specifically, we ask you not to make decisions that increase poverty or further burden the poor. The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), the Sales Tax Relief Credit and the Child Tax Credit/Child Care Tax Credit are all programs that have enjoyed long term bi-partisan support and represent an important means of protection for those living in poverty. Ending these credits, or reducing their economic benefit, would mean a tax increase or an income reduction for many middle and lower-income citizens, hitting hardest the elderly on fixed incomes and families in poverty with children.

We also encourage you to consider all options for protecting the important health care needed by the most vulnerable among us, including decisions that support rural hospitals and nursing homes.

The traditions of all the undersigned leaders are very clear on the matter of how people of faith, and the governments they create, are to treat the poor. Care for the “least of these” (Matthew 25:31-46), for the “orphans and widows” (Isaiah 1:17), for the “needy and the poor” (Quran 51:19) must be advocated for in the halls of power where decisions made can have huge impacts on the capacity of people to pull themselves out of poverty. You, as voices of the people, are those advocates.

Our churches, mosques, synagogues, temples and other worshipping communities do not have the capacity to close whatever gap the state's budget decisions open. To succeed in reducing and even eliminating poverty everyone must be involved - the private and governmental sectors, along with religious and community agencies, and each one of us as individuals.

As people of faith, we urge you to attend to the poor and vulnerable as you make budget decisions.

Respectfully,

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Rev. Todd Freeman  
College Hill Presbyterian Church  
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Rabbis Micah and Karen Citrin  
Temple Israel  
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All Souls Unitarian Church  
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Rev. Shannon Speidel  
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Rev. Paul Ragle  
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