



Dear Faithful Friend of Children,

Thank you for your interest in joining the 2019 National Observance of Children's Sabbaths, "Uniting Hearts and Voices to End Child Poverty." Across our nation people of every religion will **reflect on and respond to the sacred texts, teachings, and traditions** that call us to end poverty and act with love and justice to ensure all children have what they need not only to survive but thrive and realize their God given potential. Prayers, sermons, services and educational sessions will be times to hear anew those religious teachings and commit to faithful responses.



Children's Sabbath weekend is an opportunity to **unite our hearts and act** with urgency to lift all children out of poverty. During Children's Sabbath, religious communities will listen to the voices of families struggling in poverty and learn how best to respond to their needs. People of faith and places of worship across the religious spectrum and nation will **unite our voices** and demand our leaders end child poverty now. They will do so in prayer, public statements, on banners outside their places of worship, in community organizing meetings and more. I hope people of faith will send an avalanche of postcards to elected officials and members of Congress reminding them of our national child poverty crisis and their responsibility as elected leaders to end it. And I hope you will build ongoing relationships with elected officials demanding they enact and implement policies to ensure no child grows up poor.

One weekend of child advocacy is not enough. People of faith must **commit to working throughout the year to end preventable, immoral and costly child poverty and the homelessness and hunger it breeds**. Although Children's Sabbath is designated for a particular weekend, that weekend is intended to be a springboard for broad, sustained action for children and families year-round. Ending child poverty in our rich nation requires persistent and united efforts.

It is a moral disgrace and economic threat that nearly 1 in 5 children is poor in the wealthiest nation on earth. Permitting more than 12.8 million children to struggle in poverty when we have the means to prevent it is unjust and costly. Poverty drains child bodies and spirits. Inadequate nutrition, untreated illnesses, uncorrected vision problems and lead poisoning all sap children's health and energy. Unsafe child care, inferior schools and dangerous neighborhoods dampen ambition, self-confidence and hope. Every year we leave 12.8 million children in poverty costs our nation about \$700 billion in lost productivity and increased health and crime costs.

We can end child poverty if we choose to fight rather than ignore it. We have the money and the know-how. And all of us have the moral, social and economic responsibility. I urge us to galvanize the will of enough faith, women, parent, youth and media leaders to pierce the profound indifference to preventable and solvable child suffering and the poisonous politics of self-interest and greed.



The Children's Defense Fund's recent report *Ending Child Poverty Now* calls for an end to child poverty and shows how we can begin with a 57 percent reduction immediately. If our leaders could find the courage to increase investments in existing policies and programs that work, we could shrink child poverty 57 percent, Black child poverty 65 percent and improve economic circumstances for 95 percent of all poor children at a cost of \$52 billion a year. Our nation can afford it. There are many ways to pay for this down payment on ending preventable, costly and immoral child poverty including:

- Taxing the accumulated wealth of the top 0.1 percent of Americans at a rate of 0.25 percent each year; or
- Restoring the top individual tax rate to 39.6 percent and raising the corporate tax rate from 21 to 25 percent; or
- Eliminating tax breaks for the wealthy by taxing capital gains and dividends at the same rates as wages, saving \$130 billion a year; or
- Decreasing 10 percent of our nation's FY2019 \$686 billion military budget.
- Investments in our most vulnerable children should take precedence over massive welfare for the rich and blatantly excessive military spending.

If we love America and love our children, you and I must build a powerful movement to end child poverty and transform the political and economic priorities in a nation that has ignored the cries of millions of poor children to stack the decks in favor of a few exceedingly rich and powerful billionaires and millionaires. We must envision and realize an America where every child has enough—enough time, attention and stability from parents and other caring adults; and enough quality education, healthy food, stable shelter, accessible health care and other basics we who are more privileged want for our own children. God did not make two classes of children and we do so at our peril.

Let us commit together to making this Children's Sabbath a galvanizing weekend that amplifies our shared moral vision for an end to child poverty. Let it unite our hearts and reaffirm our commitments to making a difference. And may it inspire, inform, motivate and sustain us throughout the year to do *all* we can to level the playing field for *all* children entrusted to our care.

In faith and hope,

Marian Wright Edelman