



## COALITION ON HUMAN NEEDS

1825 K Street, NW · Suite 411 · Washington, DC 20006 · 202.223.2532 · Fax 202.223.2538 · [www.chn.org](http://www.chn.org)

**February 8, 2023**

### **Investments and Justice: A State of the Union in Which “No One is Left Behind”**

*Statement by Deborah Weinstein, Executive Director, Coalition on Human Needs:*

“President Biden gets it. ‘Amid the economic upheaval of the past four decades, too many people have been left behind or treated like they’re invisible,’ he told us during his State of the Union address. ‘That’s why we’re building an economy where no one is left behind.’

“Despite reflexive opposition, the President has secured legislation and crafted executive actions leading to 12 million new jobs and a 3.4 percent unemployment rate, the lowest in 54 years. Unemployment is down for almost every category of worker over the past year. While unemployment remains stubbornly higher for Black and Hispanic workers, their unemployment rates are at near-record or record lows.

“President Biden has demonstrated commitment to investing in the jobs, protections, and supports that will make life easier and more secure all across our country. He said with real passion, ‘Americans are tired of being played for suckers.’ From restrictions on credit card interest rates and banking fees to reduced surprise medical billing and limits on prescription drug costs, the Administration has reduced the fleecing of Americans. The Federal Trade Commission has just proposed a rule to ban non-compete employment clauses which affect about 30 million workers, including those in low-wage occupations. These protections are making – and will make – a real difference in people’s lives.

“The Biden Administration has recognized that families with children need more help. The expanded Child Tax Credit cut poverty nearly in half, but was, inexcusably, allowed to expire by too little support in Congress. President Biden repeated his support for restoring the expanded CTC. He has presided over increases in child care subsidies, although they are far more modest than the ones he continues to propose.

“He recognizes that for far too many, rents are unaffordable. In January, 12 percent said their households were not caught up on their rent; that was true of 18 percent of people living with children and 21 percent of Black households. The Administration has announced executive actions to combat unfair rent increases and to protect against evictions, but needs Congress to increase the number of rental vouchers.

“The Biden Administration has taken many steps to reduce the number of people without health insurance and to lower health care costs. Its longer Affordable Care Act enrollment periods, active efforts to sign people up and its success in getting Congress to extend higher premium subsidies has led to record-breaking increases in marketplace insurance enrollment.

Protections during the pandemic public health emergency increased the number of people with Medicaid and CHIP, but states can start dropping people from Medicaid in April. This is a perilous situation for millions of Americans; the Biden Administration needs to exercise its authority to the utmost to prevent states from recklessly denying Medicaid to those still eligible or failing to help low-income people to transfer to ACA marketplace insurance, where they will be able to get the higher premium subsidies Congress has enacted.

“The President reiterated his support for expanded home care for the aging and people with disabilities and for decent pay for those providing care. Congress’ failure to provide adequate funding is extremely short-sighted. Care workers are desperately needed; paying them adequately will not only sustain families; it will boost our economy.

“The Administration has increased SNAP and summer food program benefits and announced improved standards for school meals. But there is more to do; SNAP emergency benefits are ending and that will mean reduced benefits that families can ill afford.

“The President called for paid leave and for expanding prescription drug price reductions beyond Medicare to the general population. He wants to invest in more substance use disorder and mental health treatment, and to improve education and its affordability from pre-k through college. Making health care, education, care-giving, housing and food more affordable are the kind of investments that will give everyone a chance.

“Investments to meet these needs, address climate change, rebuild our infrastructure and create jobs will give everyone a chance, building long-overdue racial equity, and help rural and urban Americans alike. The President also called, once again, for justice for immigrants, essential for equity, humanity, and progress.

“We can afford to make these advances if we require corporations and the wealthy to pay their fair share, and the President called for increased taxes on corporate stock buybacks and for a billionaires’ tax – important steps Congress should enact. The Administration succeeded in gaining \$80 billion for the IRS, and is implementing actions to catch more high income and corporate tax cheats, as well as to improve services for average taxpayers.

“The President spoke not only of investment, but also of justice. The presence of Tyre Nichols’ parents underscored the urgency of repairing the police and the systemic bias of our criminal justice system.

“President Biden’s theme in his State of the Union was “we have to finish the job.” Yes – there is much more work to do. The President faces a divided Congress. Some want to hold the hope of continued progress and investment hostage, recklessly threatening default on the nation’s debt if the progress is not reversed. Because this is not popular, Speaker McCarthy has been retreating from the most incendiary language. But the threats remain. President Biden and responsible members of Congress must continue to lead towards investment in our people. We as citizens must hold our elected officials accountable to make these investments and to uphold equal protection of the law. President Biden has called on Congress, and on us, to build on our progress. That is the job we all must do.”

