**Rhode Island Poor People’s Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival**

HAND DELIVERED ON May 14th, 2018

Dear Governor Gina M. Raimondo, Speaker of the House of Representatives Nicholas A. Mattiello,
and Senate President Dominick J. Ruggerio,

All over the country, in state capitols like Providence and Washington, D.C., policies that promote systemic racism, poverty, the war economy, and ecological devastation are threatening our democracy and decaying our national morality.

Too often, distorted religious articulations confine morality to only personal issues and not public policies. Racist voter suppression laws undermine access to the ballot box and the power of the vote while DACA recipients are treated as political pawns. Poor people of all races are being ignored in our political conversation and dismissed in our political decisions. Programs to sustain the poor are being cut and health care access and living wages are denied at state and federal level.

Meanwhile, the U.S. House and Senate passed a tax bill that is an obscene transfer of wealth to the richest among us and the president quickly signed it into law. And further cuts that benefit the wealthiest are being passed in statehouses across the country.

Here are just a few facts:

We’ve seen a 60% increase in people living in poverty over the last 50 years, while the share of income lining the pockets of the top one percent has nearly doubled.

Federal spending on prisons has increased tenfold to $7.5 billion a year since 1976 and more than eightfold to $17 billion on immigration enforcement and deportations.

Fifty-three cents out of every discretionary dollar from our taxes goes directly to the military while the single biggest threat to global security is climate change.

We demand a change in course. Our faith traditions and state and federal constitutions all testify to the immorality of an economy that leaves out the poor, yet our political discourse consistently ignores the 140 million poor and low-income people in America.

We are here today to demand that the legislative bodies where you have taken an oath to represent us take up a moral agenda that lifts up the common good and the general welfare. And we are prepared to take direct action and engage in nonviolent civil disobedience to insist that Republicans, Democrats and Independents develop serious proposals to address such an agenda.

We are the poor and disenfranchised, clergy and moral leaders from across Rhode Island. We are the Rhode Island Poor People’s Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival. We have come to say clearly that a politics that ignores the poor has gone on far too long. And we will not be silent anymore. You can contact us via email: rhodeisland@poorpeoplescampaign.org or via phone: 401-338-1665.

Sincerely,

Reverend Ebony Grisom and Camilo Viveiros
Co-Chairs, Rhode Island Poor People’s Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival