

March 11, 2010
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the Catholic Health Association of the United States (CHA), the national leadership organization of more than 2,000 Catholic health care sponsors, systems, hospitals, long-term care facilities, and related organizations, *I am writing to urge you to move quickly to enact health reform by passing the Senate-approved legislation in conjunction with a second “corrections” bill providing for necessary legislative fixes that will improve the overall package.*

As a longtime advocate of health reform, CHA and its members are committed to creating a health care system that ensures everyone will get the health care they need, when they need it. The 47 million individuals without insurance, the 16 million individuals who are underinsured, and the insured who have trouble affording their current coverage are all in desperate need of improvements to our health care system. It has been clear for many years now that fundamental, comprehensive reform of the health care system is not merely a financial or political issue, but a moral imperative as well. We commend Congress for all your efforts over the past year on behalf of those failed by the current system, and urge you to bring those efforts to fruition as quickly as possible.

The Senate legislation goes a long way toward meeting the goals of reform, including expanding coverage to over 30 million of the uninsured through Medicaid expansion, tax credits and subsidies; providing much-needed reforms of the private insurance market; bending the cost curve of the health system by supporting delivery system reforms that improve quality of care, patient outcomes, and efficiency; and addressing federal spending levels by being fully paid for and reducing the deficit by \$100 billion over the next ten years.

CHA, however, believes the Senate legislation should be amended through a “corrections” bill to address the following issues:

- The corrections bill should increase tax credits for low-income individuals and families to ensure affordability of coverage, as outlined in the President’s recent legislative proposal;

- The bill should increase Medicaid primary care service reimbursement rates to Medicare levels to ensure access to services and providers;
- The bill should reduce the cuts to Medicaid disproportionate share hospital (DSH) payments to ensure hospitals will be able to continue to care for the most vulnerable;
- The bill should retain the Senate provisions applying the 340B drug discount program to inpatient drugs enabling hospitals that serve a large volume of low-income and uninsured patients to purchase inpatient drugs at a discounted rate; and
- The bill should ensure that the final, overall health reform package will provide no federal funding for abortion.

As you are undoubtedly aware, the next several weeks offer what is most probably the best opportunity to enact health reform during the current Congress, and make real and significant progress toward improving the lives and health security of millions of Americans. We hope that you will step up to the challenge before us to make reform a reality, and we pledge to support you and all those in favor of reform in this effort. If you have any questions or need further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me or any member of CHA's advocacy staff.

Sincerely,

Sr. Carol Keehan, DC