



*A Passionate Voice for Compassionate Care*

October 24, 2016

United States Senate Finance Committee  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the Catholic Health Association of the United States (CHA), the national leadership organization of more than 2,200 Catholic health care systems, hospitals, long-term care facilities, sponsors, and related organizations, I am writing to express our support for and urge passage of HR 5273, the Helping Hospitals Improve Patient Care Act.

The greatest priority of the Catholic health ministry in the United States is ensuring that all persons, regardless of age, income, residence, health and employment status or any other determining factor, have access to quality and affordable health care, especially vulnerable low-income individuals. HR 5273, bipartisan legislation passed by the House in June, provides vital tools to assist our hospitals in better meeting the needs of our communities and fulfilling those commitments.

Specifically, the bill would modify the Medicare readmissions reduction program to account for patients' socioeconomic status, thereby ensuring that safety net hospitals are not unfairly penalized. Many of our hospitals serve large numbers of low-income and vulnerable patients, who often need added care and support. Unfortunately, the Medicare hospital readmission program as currently structured reduces the necessary funding to provide care for vulnerable patients and harms our ability to ensure all patients receive the comprehensive care and support needed.

The bill also would provide flexibility for hospital outpatient departments as the "site-neutral" provisions of last year's Bipartisan Budget Act (BBA) are implemented. A number of Catholic hospitals that were in the process of constructing outpatient departments to improve patient access to care are facing significant payment cuts due to these provisions. HR 5273 somewhat modifies the abruptness of the BBA changes in a narrowly tailored way that does not undermine the goals of the BBA and would provide some relief.

We also support the extension of the Rural Community Hospital Demonstration program, which is included in this legislation and was approved by your Committee as well as the full Senate earlier this year.



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We ask you to ensure that our hospitals have the tools and appropriate support to address the many socioeconomic factors in our nation that affect access to and quality of care. Please support and enact the provisions of HR 5273 this year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sister Carol Keehan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sister Carol Keehan, DC  
President and CEO