



A Passionate Voice for Compassionate Care

February 9, 2011

Joseph R. Pitts
Chairman, House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The Catholic Health Association of the United States (CHA) would like to express our continued support for the intent of your legislation, H.R. 358, the Protect Life Act, to further ensure protection of the unborn and of providers' conscience rights.

We have had the opportunity to review your revised version of H.R. 358 and would like to share our concern regarding one specific modification to your legislation. Section 1303(f) regarding emergency services laws, including Emergency Medical Treatment and Active Labor Act (EMTALA), now includes a reference to a new provision regarding provider nondiscrimination (Section 1303(g)). Your provider nondiscrimination language is similar to the conscience protections of the Weldon Amendment. **CHA member hospitals have been providing compassionate, quality care under both EMTALA and the "Weldon Amendment," without conflict since the enactment of these provisions. Accordingly, CHA does not believe that there is a need for the provider nondiscrimination section to apply to EMTALA.**

As the national leadership organization of more than 2,000 Catholic health care systems, hospitals, long-term care facilities, sponsors, and related organizations, the Catholic health ministry provides care throughout the nation to patients of all ages, races and religious beliefs. Catholic hospitals provide a higher percentage of public health and specialty services than other health care providers including state and local government, other not-for-profit, or investor-owned (for-profit) hospitals. These services include neonatal ICU, obstetrics, breast cancer screening and mammograms, children's wellness, child and adolescent psychiatric services, community outreach, dental services, crisis prevention, palliative care, pain management programs, nutrition programs, hospice, HIV/AIDS services, geriatric services, alcohol and drug abuse treatment, and trauma care. Many of these services are critical to our communities and we continue to provide them even though many of these services are not self-sustaining and must be subsidized by other hospital revenue.

Building upon our country's tradition of pluralism and the freedom to exercise our beliefs, CHA has long supported language within appropriations legislation to prohibit federal funding of abortions (Hyde amendment) and language to protect hospitals and other institutional and individual health care providers should they decline to provide, pay for, or refer for abortions (Weldon Amendment).



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Again, while we continue to believe the current provisions of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) prevent federal funding of abortion, we support your efforts to further ensure permanent protection of the unborn and of provider's conscience rights and look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

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

Sr. Carol Keehan, DC
President and CEO