

THE
CATHOLIC HEALTH
ASSOCIATION
OF THE UNITED STATES



July 10, 2003

The Honorable Tom DeLay
Majority Leader
U. S. House of Representatives
242 Cannon House Office Building
Office: H-07
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. DeLay:

On behalf of the Catholic Health Association of the United States, the national leadership organization of over 2,000 Catholic health care sponsors, systems, facilities, and related organizations, I am writing to express our strong opposition to any amendment to the 2004 appropriations bill for the Departments of Labor, Health & Human Services, Education, and related agencies that would affect the provisions of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act that allow faith-based organizations to hire on the basis of religion.

The Catholic Church serves people of all faiths, often the most poor and vulnerable in our society, through our health, education, and social services agencies. Most of these agencies receive government funds or government-funded services. Indeed, Catholic organizations have been receiving government funds to provide assistance to the poor and needy for over one hundred years. To maintain its very identity, a religious or faith-based organization must be able to consider an individual's religious affiliation and willingness to support the mission and values of the institution when making employment decisions.

The Catholic health ministry in particular receives government funding under the appropriation for the Department of Health & Human Services in a variety of programs, including Medicare and Medicaid. An amendment to the appropriations bill removing the Title VII provisions would require Catholic providers to choose between caring for the poor, the elderly, and the disabled, and maintaining their Catholic identity. With over 41 million uninsured persons in our country, and the nation's health care safety net under growing financial stress, this is a choice no provider should have to make.

As you debate the appropriations bill on the House floor today, we urge you in the strongest possible terms to oppose and defeat any effort to amend the bill that would interfere with our ability to maintain our Catholic identity and provide needed care to people of all faiths in communities across the nation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael D. Place".

Rev. Michael D. Place, STD
President and Chief Executive Officer

cc: The Honorable Ralph Regula
The Honorable C.W. Bill Young

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