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Catholic Health Association of the United States Alarmed That the President and Congressional Leaders Are Considering Creating More Barriers for Those Living in Poverty as Part of Debt Ceiling Negotiations
Statement by Sr. Mary Haddad, RSM, President and CEO

[WASHINGTON, DC] – “As Congressional leaders and the President continue to negotiate a debt ceiling agreement, it appears that eliminating food assistance, medical coverage and other family supports for those in most in need tops the list of programs that could be cut.

“It is unconscionable that faced with a 31.4 trillion-dollar debt ceiling, families and individuals most in need could bear the burden of ensuring our government’s ability to borrow money. Our leaders have it backwards. Instead of making it harder for our poorest neighbors to qualify for support and assistance like Medicaid, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), they should be prioritizing meeting these basic needs so people are better equipped to fulfill their potential, including in the workplace.

“Time after time, we have seen thousands of people lose access to needed support and coverage simply because they don’t know about the new requirements or because the state or individuals can’t keep up with the paperwork. At the same time, Medicaid protections during the COVID-19 pandemic are ending and states are beginning the redetermination process to confirm which enrollees are eligible to keep their coverage—a tremendous undertaking for states and beneficiaries alike. According to the [Kaiser Family Foundation](#), this process alone could result in the loss of health insurance for 17 million people.

“The situation is perhaps most dire for the 40% of Medicaid beneficiaries who also receive SNAP benefits. If current SNAP proposals are included in a debt ceiling package, nearly a million older adults will be at risk of losing food assistance if they cannot meet the new requirements or prove that they qualify for an exemption. Combined, this means many millions of people could experience new instability and illness that impacts their ability to work. I know this is not what our leaders intend but it is the likely reality.

“The medical community has long known that tying work requirements to safety net benefits is a misguided and ineffective policy. Most major medical groups, including the Catholic Health Association, one of the largest providers of care to Medicaid populations, oppose them.

“At a time when [more than 10 percent of U.S. households are food insecure](#)—including 2.3 million households with children—and 17 million individuals are already expected to lose Medicaid coverage—our leaders should not make it more difficult to access nutrition, healthcare and family supports. Instead, we need to ensure vulnerable individuals and families have assistance to meet basic needs, helping them to flourish and fulfill their greatest potential including the dignity that comes with work and the ability to contribute to our society.”

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The Catholic Health Association of the United States is the national leadership organization of the Catholic health ministry, representing the largest nonprofit provider of health care services in the nation.

- *1 in 7 patients in the U.S. is cared for in a Catholic hospital each day.*
- *Catholic health care, which includes more than 2,200 hospitals, nursing homes, long-term care facilities, systems, sponsors, and related organizations, serves the full continuum of health care across our nation.*
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