



A Passionate Voice for Compassionate Care

June 27, 2011

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC

U.S. Senate
Washington, DC

Dear Representative/Senator:

On behalf of the Catholic Health Association of the United States (CHA)—the national leadership organization of more than 2,000 Catholic health care systems, hospitals, long-term care facilities, sponsors, and related organizations—I urge you to keep the needs of those served by the Medicare and Medicaid programs foremost in mind as Congress and the Administration seek options to reduce the federal deficit. CHA simply cannot support efforts to slash funding for these vital safety net programs. Such reductions will threaten the availability of health care for people of all age groups and economic situations and drastically reduce their ability to be healthy and active participants in our society.

While harmful spending cuts remain a direct threat to federal health programs, proposals for across-the-board spending caps also will lead to vastly reduced services for their beneficiaries. Arbitrary caps or spending targets inevitably would lead to cuts in services; an increase in the number of uninsured and under-insured; further limits in access to care and physicians' services; and cost-shifting to state and local governments and individuals. At the same time, proposals to reduce federal Medicaid expenditures by cutting the federal share of Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program costs also would shift costs to the states when they can least afford it, prompting them to cut payments to health care providers and scale back health services for the most vulnerable populations.

The mission of Catholic health care calls us to be distinguished through service to and advocacy for those at the margins of our society, and who rely on federal health programs. Medicaid and Medicare are the foundation of our nation's health safety net and provide essential services to working families, children, the elderly and the disabled. Medicare has greatly reduced poverty due to medical expenses among the elderly. Medicaid provides essential support through a wide variety of services affecting a large segment of the population, including acute care, long-term care and home health services, neonatal programs and maternity care.

We do realize the urgency of finding ways to reduce the growing federal deficit, and appreciate the efforts so many have undertaken thus far to achieve that goal. However, as providers of health services and as participants in a healing ministry that respects the dignity of all people, we call on you to ensure that these efforts do not cause greater harm to those whom we serve. We hope



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that members of Congress and the Administration will find a balanced method including revenue increases to reduce the deficit with the least amount of detrimental effects as possible, and look forward to working with you to ensure that our spending priorities adequately reflect that commitment.

Sincerely,

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

Sr. Carol Keehan, DC
President and CEO