



A Passionate Voice for Compassionate Care

February 15, 2022

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rosa L DeLauro
Chair
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Vice Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Leahy, Chair DeLauro, Ranking Member Granger and Vice Chairman Shelby:

On behalf of the Catholic Health Association of the United States (CHA), the national leadership organization representing more than 2,200 Catholic health care systems, hospitals, long-term care facilities, clinics, service providers and organizations, **I urge you to support the continued inclusion of protections for institutional and individual health care providers' conscience rights, known as the Weldon Amendment**, in the FY2022 Labor, Health and Human Services and Education (L/HHS/Edu) Appropriations bill.

Catholic health care is the largest not-for-profit provider of health care services in the nation providing acute care, skilled nursing, long-term care services as well as other services including hospice, home health, assisted living and senior housing across our country. All 50 states and the District of Columbia are served by Catholic health care organizations and Catholic hospitals alone provide:

- Inpatient care to 1 in 7 patients in the United States each year;
- More than 5 million admissions, including one million Medicaid admissions; and
- Employment for approximately 750,000 individuals.

Congress has long enacted with bipartisan support provider conscience protections known as the "Weldon Amendment." That amendment protects from discrimination providers that do not provide, pay for, provide coverage of or refer for abortions. Catholic health care serves patients throughout the nation of all ages, race, and religious beliefs. This existing legal protection is essential for the continuation of both Catholic health care and our country's tradition of pluralism and commitment to freedom of religion and of conscience. We are therefore deeply concerned that the L/HHS/Edu appropriations bill adopted by the House and the "Committee Print" released by the Senate Appropriations Committee failed to include the Weldon Amendment and its important protections for physicians and health care providers.

As the Catholic health ministry, our mission and our ethical standards in health care are rooted in and inseparable from the Catholic Church's teachings about the dignity of each and every human person, created in the image of God. Access to health care is essential to promote and protect the inherent and inalienable worth and dignity of every individual. These values form the basis for our steadfast commitment to the compelling moral implications of our health care ministry and drive CHA's long history of insisting on and working for the right of everyone to affordable, accessible health care. Continuing to retain these essential provider conscience protections in current law represents good public policy and respects the deeply held beliefs of health care providers regarding their duties to preserve life and avoid doing harm.

The Catholic health ministry remains committed to serving the health needs of all, and to achieving greater access to health care services while respecting the contributions and rights to conscience of religiously affiliated health care providers. Your support for the inclusion of the Weldon amendment protections in the final FY2022 appropriations bill is critical for ensuring that our ministry continues to be able to provide care to our patients and to remain a voice in favor of health care that serves all.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sr. Mary Haddad". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Sr. Mary Haddad, RSM
President and CEO

CC: Members of the Senate and House Appropriations Committees