



A Passionate Voice for Compassionate Care

May 9, 2013

Judiciary Committee

U.S. Senate

Washington, DC

Dear 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 am writing to stress our strong support and to ask for your vote in favor of two amendments to S. 744, the Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act. The two amendments, proposed by Senator Mazei Hirono, would ensure a safety net for the most vulnerable, especially children and pregnant women. CHA is founded upon a tradition of helping the poorest and most vulnerable among us, and is called to advocate on behalf of such vulnerable populations as our nation's immigrants.

The first amendment (Hirono #16) would ensure access to coverage under the Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Programs for all low-income, lawfully present children and pregnant women—including those deemed as "registered provisional immigrants" (RPI) under the legislation—who otherwise meet the eligibility requirements for these programs. The amendment also allows lawfully present individuals to be eligible for the Medicare program and for the nutritional assistance program (SNAP). The long-term effects of inadequate health care services and nutrition can prevent children, many of who will become U.S. citizens, from reaching their full potential. Without this amendment, low-income children would be denied access to Medicaid and CHIP coverage for 15 years. As you know, the long-term health benefits of investing in prenatal care are well established, and we believe it is arbitrary to deny



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such coverage to low-income immigrant pregnant women, especially when their children will be United States citizens at birth. No child should ever be denied access to health care coverage and food, especially in the United States of America.

The second amendment (Hirono #17) would clarify that those with RPI status will satisfy the current five-year waiting period for federal benefits, including Medicaid, during their 10-year provisional status, rather than having to wait an additional five years after being granted permanent lawful status. While CHA has always advocated the elimination of this waiting period altogether, we strongly support any measures that would shorten the length of time for immigrants to have access to vital health programs, and feel that this will ultimately benefit not only the health and well-being of the immigrant population but that of our nation as a whole.

We thank the Committee for its attention and focus on these important issues. CHA strongly supports the broad goals of comprehensive immigration reform and is encouraged by efforts in the Senate to improve aspects of S. 744, so that it will provide the broadest range of health care benefits to the most vulnerable populations.

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