



A Passionate Voice for Compassionate Care

June 5, 2017

The Honorable Johnny Isakson
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mark Warner
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Isakson and Warner,

On behalf of the Catholic Health Association of the United States (CHA), the national leadership organization of more than 2,200 Catholic health care systems, hospitals, long-term care facilities, sponsors, and related organizations, I am writing to express our support for your bipartisan legislation entitled the Patient Choice and Quality Care Act of 2017.

Persons facing serious illness or approaching the end of life need compassionate, coordinated, patient and family-centered care based on their needs and wishes. This type of care ensures that patients have the knowledge to make informed decisions about their care and enhances their quality of life which helps relieve the emotional and financial burdens on their families. Your legislation would help ensure that Medicare patients facing serious or life-threatening illness have enhanced access to care planning and coordination of services to ensure patients receive the care they want and need. It also provides funding to support the development of a public information campaign to encourage effective care planning and test new models of care for those with advanced illnesses.

Compassionate care to all persons, especially to those who face serious illness, who are in pain or who are dying, is a hallmark of Catholic health care. We are following the example of Jesus when we care for people who are in great need. Over the past 20 years, Catholic health care has worked to establish palliative care programs—specialized care for people with serious illnesses—in our hospitals and long-term care facilities without receiving direct reimbursement for these services. Our palliative care services, delivered by interdisciplinary teams, are focused on providing patients with relief from the symptoms, pain and stress of a serious illness - whatever the diagnosis – with the goal of improving quality of life for both the patient and the family. This is achieved through care planning based on open, honest communication about severity of illness and medical treatment options; effective pain and symptom control; and highly coordinated care that addresses the physical, emotional, social and spiritual aspects of dealing with serious illness.

As our country looks for ways to improve health care quality for persons with serious illness, we believe that improving access to patient-centered and coordinated care planning will help us reach this goal, and your legislation is an essential piece to move us in that direction.

Sincerely,

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

Sr. Carol Keehan, DC
President and CEO