



A Passionate Voice for Compassionate Care

November 28, 2016

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC

Dear Representative:

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 several vital provisions within HR 34, the 21st Century Cures Act, and to ask for your support in enacting this legislation.

The greatest priority of Catholic health care in the United States is ensuring that all persons, regardless of age, income, residence, health and employment status or any other determining factor, have access to quality and affordable health care, especially vulnerable low-income individuals. The revised 21st Century Cures bill would provide vital tools to assist our hospitals and providers in better meeting the needs of our communities by strengthening the mental and behavioral health system; providing funding and programs to combat the opioid crisis; and ensuring continued access to critical care in rural and low-income communities.

Specifically, we applaud the inclusion of the bipartisan mental health reform legislation in HR 34. This legislation includes provisions to begin reforming our mental health system through coordinating and strengthening needed services. It would improve care for Medicaid beneficiaries by clarifying issues concerning same-day billing and ensuring comprehensive care for children in institutions for mental disease; provide grants to support community-based care and strengthen the mental health workforce; improve mental health parity; and provide for programs to reach vulnerable populations who desperately need mental health services, particularly children and adolescents.

We are also pleased the bill includes provisions to modify the Medicare readmissions reduction program to account for patients' socioeconomic status, thereby ensuring that safety net hospitals are not unfairly penalized. It would provide flexibility for hospital outpatient departments as the "site-neutral" provisions of last year's Bipartisan Budget Act (BBA) are implemented, ensuring those hospitals can continue to improve patient access to care without facing significant payment cuts. We also support the extension of the Rural Community Hospital Demonstration program and the continued moratorium on enforcement of the "direct supervision" regulations on critical access and rural hospitals, which are included in this legislation.



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The Catholic health ministry applauds the efforts of all those who have helped to craft earlier legislation to provide so many of these important provisions for improving care, and those who worked to include them in HR 34. We hope you will join us in supporting the provisions of this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Sr. Carol Keehan".

Sr. Carol Keehan, DC
President and CEO