

August 5, 2010

United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:



On behalf of the Catholic Health Association (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 express **CHA's strong support for temporarily extending the enhanced Federal Medicaid matching payments (FMAP) to states but also to express our serious objections to cutting the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly Food Stamps) by \$11.9 billion to pay for the extension.**

The Catholic health ministry forms an important part of America's safety net institutions with many Catholic hospitals and nursing homes serving a disproportionate share of low-income, uninsured, and underinsured individuals every day. We have witnessed firsthand the increased financial difficulties low-income, vulnerable individuals in our communities are facing during this economic downturn especially in meeting basic needs including food and health care.

Both the Medicaid program and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program are extremely important safety net programs and the funding of one should never be cut to pay for the other. More than 40 million low-income vulnerable families and individuals depend on both the Medicaid and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programs. In an average month, 87 percent of food assistance households have incomes at or below the federal poverty level; that is less than \$17,600 a year for a family of three. The food benefit individuals currently receive averages **less than \$4.50 per day** and that is with the boosted benefit levels provided by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Increasing hunger is not the answer to ensuring health care.

States are facing major budget shortfalls at a time when safety net services and benefits are most needed. Temporarily extending the enhanced Federal Medicaid matching payments (FMAP) will keep the safety net strong and reduce the need for cuts in Medicaid benefits, eligibility and provider payments. Helping states and counties to cover Medicaid costs by increasing FMAP will protect low-income families from loss of medical care at a time when rising joblessness and higher costs make them particularly vulnerable.

We urge Congress to act swiftly to enact a temporary extension of the enhanced Federal Medicaid matching rate while protecting the least among us, ensuring both access to health care and food assistance.

Sincerely,

Sr. Carol Keehan, DC
President and CEO