

June 5, 2009

United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the Catholic Health Association of the United States (CHA), I am writing to urge you to make comprehensive health care reform, especially health care coverage for all, a top priority.



CHA is the national leadership organization of the Catholic health ministry, representing the largest group of not-for-profit providers of health care services in the nation:

- 1 in 6 patients in the United States is cared for in a Catholic hospital each year.
- All 50 states and the District of Columbia are served by Catholic health care organizations.
- Over 600 hundred hospitals and more 800 post-acute care organizations provide the full continuum of health care.

CHA and its members are committed to creating a health care system that ensures everyone will get the health care they need, when they need it. CHA's [*Vision for U.S. Health Care*](#) lays out the Catholic health ministry's principles for reforming the health care system. As a central component of our vision, we believe that health care should be:

- Available and accessible to everyone, paying special attention to the poor and vulnerable;
- Health and prevention oriented, with the goal of enhancing the health status of communities;
- Sufficiently and fairly financed;
- Transparent and consensus-driven, in allocation of resources, and organized for cost-effective care and administration;
- Patient centered, and designed to address health needs at all stages of life, from conception to natural death; and
- Safe, effective and designed to deliver the greatest possible Quality.

As the number of uninsured continues to increase, and even those who have insurance potentially face losing their coverage, health reform has taken on additional urgency. As health care providers, we know that individuals who lack health insurance are far less likely to receive basic health care services and are generally in poorer health as a result. They have more difficulty obtaining primary care and essential medication, and have a higher rate of hospitalization for treatable conditions such as hypertension, asthma, or

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diabetes. When such conditions go undiagnosed, untreated or unmanaged, patients are more likely to seek urgent and expensive care that would not have been necessary if their conditions had been properly identified and monitored.

For individuals the consequences of lacking health coverage can be dire. The Institute of Medicine (IOM) found that 18,000 individuals under the age of 65 die each year due to the lack of health insurance. Many in working families already cannot afford health insurance, and the current economic situation is only increasing those numbers. For these people, and those whose coverage is inadequate, the current U.S. health care system is failing. In light of these facts, it is clear that fundamental, comprehensive reform of the health care system is not merely a financial or political issue, but a moral imperative as well.

Perhaps at no other time in our nation's history has health reform been so necessary and so possible to achieve, and I urge you to make this a top priority and to work in support of legislation to provide meaningful health coverage for everyone. If we at CHA can be of assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me or a member of our advocacy staff.

Sincerely,

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

Sr. Carol Keehan, DC
President and CEO