

November 7, 2009

U. S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the Catholic Health Association of the United States (CHA), the national leadership organization of more than 2,000 Catholic health care sponsors, systems, hospitals, long-term care facilities, and related organizations, I am writing in support of H.R. 3962, the Affordable Health Care for America Act.



A longtime advocate of health reform, 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. The 47 million individuals without insurance, the 16 million individuals who are underinsured, and the insured who have trouble affording their current coverage are all in desperate need of changes to our health care system. It has been clear for many years now that fundamental, comprehensive reform of the health care system is not merely a financial or political issue, but a moral imperative as well. We commend Congress and all the organization working for reform this year for their efforts on behalf of those failed by the current system.

While we have additional suggestions to improve the bill, we believe that H.R. 3962 will make significant progress in addressing the problem of the uninsured by extending coverage to an estimated 97 percent of residents in the U. S. through policies such as: expansions in Medicaid to everyone under 150 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL); subsidies for individuals and families (including legal permanent residents) up to 400 percent of FPL; insurance market reforms; and access to preventive care and chronic care management.

While CHA has no fixed policy position on the necessity of a public insurance option, we are pleased that the final legislation includes a provision allowing the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services to negotiate rates with providers within certain parameters for the proposed public option.

As noted previously, we are grateful for the efforts among members of the House to ensure that the provisions of H.R. 3962 include language that is as clear and unambiguous as possible to maintain the current restrictions on federal funding of abortion services. We appreciate the concern given to this matter, and are pleased that the legislation as amended includes provisions to clarify and strengthen these restrictions within a reasonable framework and retains conscience protections for health providers.

While this bill like all bills is not perfect it makes significant progress in an area that has caused great suffering for so many in our country for so long.

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