

January 27, 2009

United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC



On behalf of the Catholic Health Association (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 to express CHA's strong support for the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. This legislation will help reduce the increasing number of uninsured during this economic recession and provide critical investments in health care infrastructure to ensure access to quality care.

We are pleased the bill includes a temporary increase in the Federal Medicaid matching payments to states to help ensure the safety net remains strong. 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 in meeting basic needs, including health care. 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.

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We also support the provisions to provide temporary subsidies for the continuation of health insurance coverage under COBRA; to extend unsubsidized COBRA coverage for older and tenured workers beyond the 18 months provided under current law; and to provide for the establishment of standards, payment incentives, privacy protections and funding to encourage the widespread adoption of health information technology.

We urge Congress to act swiftly to enact a recovery package that will boost our economy and assist low-income families and individuals from added financial hardship during this continuing economic downturn. If I can be of any further assistance in this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Rodgers". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Michael Rodgers
Senior Vice President, Public Policy and Advocacy