



A Passionate Voice for Compassionate Care

February 23, 2021

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 2,200 Catholic health care systems, hospitals, long-term care facilities, sponsors, and related organizations, **I am writing to express our support for the *American Rescue Plan Act of 2021***. This legislation contains critical support for families who have lost health insurance during the COVID-19 pandemic while at the same time addressing the public health and economic crises in the country.

Expanding Health Care Access

CHA continues to advocate for a just and equitable health care system and calls for health care to be available, affordable and accessible to everyone, paying special attention to poor and vulnerable individuals. Guided by this vision, we strongly support the bill's provisions to increase the value of and expand eligibility for premium tax subsidies in the Health Insurance Marketplaces. We also commend the bill's effort to guarantee affordability for many individuals and working families by ensuring that enrollees pay no more than 8.5% of their income for coverage and support the bill's provisions to increase subsidies and financial support for those who have experienced job loss and continued unemployment due to the economic crisis. Lastly, we strongly support the bill's investments in the Medicaid program—extending coverage for post-partum care to mothers for a full year; expanding access to nearly 4 million uninsured low-income adults in non-expansion Medicaid states through financial incentives to states; and fully covering COVID-19 vaccines and treatment for Medicaid and CHIP beneficiaries.

Increasing Resources for Testing, Treatment and Vaccinations with a Focus on Health Equity

The *American Rescue Plan Act of 2021* makes commitments in testing, treatment and the distribution of vaccines prioritizing populations identified as most at risk for suffering negative health outcomes from COVID-19—namely the elderly, the poor, rural residents and communities of color. We support the provisions strengthening the national and global COVID-19 vaccination effort, the development and distribution of tests and personal protective equipment and the targeted investments in combating outbreaks in long-term care facilities. These increased federal investments outline a commitment to health equity while also ensuring that marginalized populations like those living in rural communities, Native American reservations and territories are given the resources to combat the public health and economic crisis.

Bolstering the Social Safety Net

Lastly, we support the many components of the bill that meet the economic needs of struggling individuals, families and communities. These include the expansions of several tax credits that support families, extending and increasing the pandemic unemployment assistance program and creating the Pandemic Emergency fund for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

program. Additionally, the bill bolsters important social safety net provisions to meet basic needs like increased aid to address food insecurity, additional funding for the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program, support for housing stability and the low-income home energy assistance program (LIHEAP). Lastly, we support the bill's directed funding for programs at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and the Health Resources Services Administration to address the mental health, substance abuse and opioid challenges while also providing for a 100% federal medical assistance percentage (FMAP) for mobile crisis intervention services.

Future Considerations to Aid Safety-Net Providers

Throughout the year our members have shown their courageous compassion in aiding their patients, families and communities affected by the coronavirus. While we are inspired by their tireless efforts at the forefront of responding to the pandemic, Catholic hospitals, long-term care facilities and other safety-net providers continue to face ongoing and financial challenges as they strive to respond to this unprecedented public health emergency and work to procure medical needs such as personal protective equipment (PPE), testing and vaccination supplies.

Over the last year, many facilities have changed their operations to focus on treating and expanding capacity for COVID-19 patients while protecting and caring for other patients, residents and staff. These efforts and the growing challenge of increasing capacity for a nationwide vaccination effort have resulted in unprecedented logistical and financial challenges for front-line health care providers. We therefore urge you to include additional support to front-line providers to further enhance the investments made the *American Rescue Plan Act of 2021*. These include bolstering the Provider Relief Fund; extending the moratorium on Medicare Sequester cuts beyond the March 31, 2021 deadline; providing a mechanism for loan forgiveness for safety-net hospitals and providers in the Medicare Accelerated and Advance Payment (AAP) program; and increasing the federal medical assistance percentage (FMAP) in Medicaid to at least 12%.

As we all work to heal and support our communities during this pandemic, we express our hope that Congress will continue to work together to protect and support our communities, prevent further spread of the coronavirus, increase vaccinations and bring this crisis to an end. We again urge swift passage of legislation that can deliver the necessary resources to save lives and support families and communities.

Sincerely,



Sr. Mary Haddad, RSM
President and CEO