

Dear Senator:

We, the undersigned faith-based organizations, write to urge you to include legal immigrants in any national health care plan enacted by Congress. While as individual organizations we may have different positions on other issues in health care reform, any plan should be inclusive of legal immigrants and other vulnerable immigrant populations.

It is our strongly-held view that the provision of health care is a shared responsibility grounded in the sacred act of creation and our common humanity. Universal teachings within the scriptural texts of our diverse faith communities call us to welcome strangers and compassionately care for their basic human needs – including health care.

Legal immigrants work hard, pay taxes, contribute to society, and pay into the Social Security and Medicare systems, as is required of U.S. citizens. In addition, they seek to pay their fair share for health care. We seek to rectify the injustice of denying access to needed health insurance for legal immigrants and their families who are not able to purchase affordable private insurance.

Specifically, in any proposal that moves forward, we call for provisions that:

- Provide permanent residents with equal access to subsidies to help them purchase health insurance.
- Eliminate the five-year waiting period which excludes low-income immigrants from Medicaid.
- Include all immigrant children and pregnant women, regardless of their immigration status, in eligibility for Medicaid.

Uninsured immigrants, like uninsured citizens, are vulnerable. With no access to preventative care, they too often have to rely on emergency-room care, which is always more expensive and is often too late. Providing them with access to health care would ensure healthier immigrant communities, would drive down the cost of uncompensated care, and ultimately would contribute to savings for all of us.

It is important that, as Congress considers health care reform, legal and other vulnerable immigrants have access to health care coverage. In such action, we are ensuring that they have what they need in order to live out the fullness of their potential as individuals and as contributing members of our society.

Sincerely,

American Muslim Health Professionals
Buddhist Peace Fellowship
Catholic Charities USA
Catholic Health Association
Catholic Healthcare West
Church Women United
Church World Service, Immigration and Refugee Program
Disciples Justice Action Network
Evangelicals for Social Action
Faithful Reform in Health Care
Franciscan Action Network
Friends Committee on National Legislation
International Parish Nurse Resource Center
Irish Apostolate USA
Islamic Medical Association of North America
Islamic Society of North America
Leadership Conference for Women Religious
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service
Maryknoll Office of Social Concerns
Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office
Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Council of Jewish Women
National Episcopal Health Ministries
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Washington Office
Progressive National Baptist Convention
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas
Sojourners
Union for Reform Judaism
United Church of Christ
United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops