



A Passionate Voice for Compassionate Care

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ENHANCING MEDICAID AND ENSURING A STRONG SAFETY NET

THE ISSUE

Public health insurance programs such as Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) are the foundation of our nation's safety net and provide necessary health care services to working families, children, the elderly and the disabled, many of whom would be uninsured in the absence of a strong and vital Medicaid program. Medicaid provides health coverage for nearly 70 million individuals and is also a major source of financing for long-term care and a primary funding source for America's safety net institutions, including many Catholic hospitals and nursing homes that serve a disproportionate share of the low-income, uninsured and underinsured in their communities every day.

MINISTRY TRADITION

For decades CHA and our members have carried the message that health care is a basic human right essential to human flourishing, and we have advocated policies to ensure that everyone has access to affordable health care. We are inspired by the wisdom of the social doctrine of the Church, which teaches that each person is created in the image of God; that each human life is sacred and possesses inalienable worth; and that health care is essential to promoting and protecting the inherent dignity of every individual. The first principle in our *Vision for U.S. Health Care* affirms our call to pay special attention to the needs of the poor and the vulnerable, those most likely to lack access to health care, in our journey towards affordable, accessible health care for all. This commitment is why the Catholic health ministry has strongly supported public health care programs like Medicaid and CHIP.

CHA'S POSITION AND ACTIVITIES

The Catholic Health Association (CHA) supports efforts to strengthen our nation's public health insurance programs. The fundamental structure of the Medicaid program as an entitlement for the low-income, the elderly and the disabled in our country must be preserved and strengthened. Today, Medicaid provides a safety net for its beneficiaries and states as well through the program's commitment to matching federal funds. CHA advocates a strong federal presence in Medicaid, overall expansion to all low-income families and individuals and restoration of benefits to legal immigrants. CHA supports several ways to preserve and strengthen Medicaid, including:

- **Medicaid Funding** – CHA continues to urge Congress to reject cuts in Medicaid funding as part of any federal deficit reduction effort. Congress must continue to provide Medicaid with adequate and sustainable funding to ensure the ability of health care providers, including providers of long term care services, to maintain quality and compassionate care for the nearly 70 million vulnerable Americans who rely on Medicaid for their health care. CHA is specifically opposed to the dramatic cuts proposed in the House FY2016 budget resolution as well as the proposed block-granting of the program to the states. Such proposals simply shift the cost burden onto individual beneficiaries, health providers, and local and state governments. While this may seem to be a temporary solution to reducing the federal deficit,

the long-term effects of this strategy will be to further erode the safety net and jeopardize the health and economic safety of millions of Americans.

- **Improve access and care coordination**—CHA strongly supports efforts to coordinate and integrate person-centered health care services along the continuum of care and greater use of medical homes, care coordinators and chronic care management, especially for those dually eligible for Medicaid and Medicare.
- **Behavioral Health Care Services**—CHA supports efforts to improve access to behavioral health care services in all care settings.