

June 9, 2010

Jennifer Butler
Executive Director
Faith in Public Life
1101 Vermont Avenue, NW, 9th Floor
Washington, DC 20005

The Honorable Kathleen Sebelius
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Hubert H. Humphrey Building
200 Independence Avenue, SW, Room 120F
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Sebelius:

Attached please find a letter from 37 diverse faith leaders extending their support to you and the Department of Health and Human Services as you work to implement the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA), particularly the Pregnancy Assistance Fund. People of faith from across the religious spectrum have joined their voices to applaud this provision in PPACA as a tremendous step forward for pregnant and parenting women.

Faith in Public Life was proud to help organize the letter in cooperation with the office of Senator Casey and our partners in the faith community whose efforts to pass health care reform made a critical difference. As a strategy center for the faith community, we have supported and amplified these efforts throughout the healthcare reform debate and will continue to do so.

Please let me know if you have any questions about the letter, or if we can be of further assistance as you work to implement this important provision in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. Thank you for your leadership and tireless efforts to ensure that all Americans have access to quality health care.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Butler

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The Honorable Kathleen Sebelius
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Hubert H. Humphrey Building
200 Independence Avenue, SW, Room 120F
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Sebelius:

We write to offer our support to you as you look to implement a critical new program in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA) that represents a tremendous step forward for pregnant and parenting women in America: the Pregnancy Assistance Fund.

Year after year in America, millions of young women find themselves facing motherhood unprepared for the challenges that lay ahead. For those who have yet to graduate from college or high school, the burden can be particularly daunting. Despite the knowledge that staying in school can help over the long run, in the face of immediate pressures many end up dropping out or making other tough choices that harm their futures and their long-term economic security, representing a loss for themselves, their children, and America.

Fortunately, with the passage of PPACA and the establishment of the Pregnancy Assistance Fund, we have an unprecedented opportunity to not only help these young mothers fulfill their own potential, but to protect and enhance the future of the next generation. As you know, the Pregnancy Assistance Fund provides \$25 million per year for the next ten years to support pregnant and parenting teens, young women, and victims of domestic violence. The grants, which will be awarded to states, can be used to provide parenting classes for teens or college students, family housing, child care, and flexible or alternative academic scheduling; and intervention, accompaniment and supportive social services to pregnant women who are victims of domestic violence, sexual violence, sexual assault or stalking.

Inclusion of this program played a key role in the passage of health care reform legislation earlier this year and we join together to express our appreciation for including the Pregnancy Assistance Fund as a part of the PPACA. The Pregnancy Assistance Fund truly represents common ground: it is about supporting pregnant women, and as such is something that we can rally around.

As members of the faith-based community committed to supporting vulnerable pregnant women and their families, we ask you to connect us with the individual within HHS who is responsible for ensuring implementation of the Pregnancy Assistance Fund beginning this year. We are ready to offer our assistance and look forward to working together to ensure the success of this groundbreaking program.

Sincerely,

Sr. Carol Keehan, DC
President and CEO
Catholic Health Association of the U.S.

Simone Campbell, SSS
Executive Director
NETWORK: A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby

Rev. Jim Wallis
President and CEO
Sojourners

Dr. Barbara Williams-Skinner
President, Skinner Leadership Institute
Co-Facilitator, National African American Clergy Network

Jim Winkler
General Secretary
General Board of Church and Society
United Methodist Church

Dr. Sharon E. Watkins
General Minister
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada

Dr. T. DeWitt Smith, Jr
President, Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc.
Senior Pastor, Trinity Baptist Church of Metro Atlanta (Decatur, GA)

Alexander D. Baumgarten
Director of Government Relations
The Episcopal Church

Leadership Team of the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas
Mary Waskowiak, RSM
Eileen Campbell, RSM
Anne Curtis, RSM
Pat McDermott, RSM
Linda Werthman, RSM

Institute Justice Team of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas
Jean Stokan, Director
Susan Severin, RSM
Regina McKillip, OP

Reverend Dr. DeeDee M. Coleman, Co-Chair, Commission on Social Justice & Prison Ministry

Progressive National Baptist Convention
Senior Pastor, Russell Street Baptist Church, Detroit, Michigan
Executive Director, Wings of Faith, Inc., Detroit, Michigan

Morna Murray

President
Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good

Stephen Schneck

Director
Institute for Policy Research & Catholic Studies
The Catholic University of America

T. Michael McNulty, SJ

Justice and Peace Director
Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM)

Rev. Andrew D. Genszler

Director of Advocacy
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

New Evangelical Partnership for the Common Good

Richard Cizik, President
David Gushee, Chair of the Board
Steven D. Martin, Executive Director

Ronald J. Sider, President

Evangelicals for Social Action

Nicholas P. Cafardi

Civil and Canon Lawyer
Professor and Former Dean
Duquesne University School of Law

James E. Hug, S.J.

President
Center of Concern

Dennis M. Doyle

Professor of Religious Studies
University of Dayton

William O'Neill, S.J.

Associate Prof. of Social Ethics
Jesuit School of Theology

Santa Clara University

Todd Whitmore

Associate Professor
Department of Theology
University of Notre Dame

Gerald J. Beyer, Ph.D.

Associate Professor
Christian Social Ethics
Department of Theology
Saint Joseph's University

Kenneth R. Himes, OFM

Boston College

Kristin E. Heyer

Associate Professor
Religious Studies Department
Santa Clara University

David DeCosse

Director of Campus Ethics Programs
Markkula Center for Applied Ethics
Santa Clara University

Maria Riley, OP

Center of Concern

Vincent J. Miller

Gudorf Chair in Catholic Theology and Culture
Department of Religious Studies
University of Dayton

Jeannine Hill Fletcher

Associate Professor of Theology
Fordham University

Alex Mikulich

Research Fellow
Jesuit Social Research Institute
Loyola University

David O'Brien

University Professor of Faith and Culture University of Dayton

Lisa Sowell Cahill
Professor of Theology
Boston College

Robert Darling Young
Associate Professor of Theology
University of Notre Dame

Terrence W. Tilley
Professor of Catholic Theology
Chair, Theology Department
Fordham University, Bronx NY

William Portier
Professor of Religious Studies
University of Dayton

David Hollenbach, S.J.
University Chair in Human Rights and International Justice
Theology Department
Boston College

Bruce Morrill
Theology Department
Boston College