

## EDITOR'S NOTE

When it comes to thinking about this issue of *Health Progress* exploring Health Care Across America, it's helpful to consider: What are our values, and how are those reflected in our health care system?<sup>1</sup>



BETSY  
TAYLOR

In a Catholic care environment, articulation of values is clearer than in many other settings, and consideration of that question is woven throughout this issue. And I think this question leads to other ones, including: Who do we value? In Catholic social teaching, the Church “proclaims that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society.” As the U.S. bishops summarize in a reflection on these teachings, “We believe that every person is precious, that people are more important than things, and that the measure of every institution is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of the human person.”<sup>2</sup>

We don't just value someone if they've got the correct papers and pay their bills. Those matters are important, but they're not the litmus test by which a Catholic health care ministry provides care. Are our institutions threatening or enhancing the life and dignity of all people? And if, in Catholic institutions, we feel we do better at this than some other organizations — or at least aspects of it better — is there a way to raise our voices together to tend to a national health care system in need of reimagination?

Across our nation, people are confused by a splintered health care system. They may swim in medical debt, have trouble understanding a doctor's guidance, or be in pain, afraid or even just bone-tired. I could cite a study, but every one of us has seen this with our own eyes at one point or another.

And it is not enough to shrug off a broken system, because we — Catholic health care collectively — are in the system-fixing business. And we are in the system-fixing business because the nation's patients deserve nothing less than that.

### NOTES

1. This video, by *The Washington Post*, features a lot of food for thought about other nations' health care systems, and what they may reveal about our own system, including a few speakers who discuss the role that a society's values play related to its health care system: “What Experts Say About Who Has the World's Best Health Care System-Opinion,” *The Washington Post*, June 17, 2021, YouTube video, 9:14, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wfsJXo1h1G0>.
2. “Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching,” United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, <https://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/seven-themes-of-catholic-social-teaching>.

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