

We Can't Wait ... for a Health System That Works for Everyone



BY JEFF TIEMAN

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In the past several months, it has been nearly impossible to watch the news or read the newspaper and not see a reference to health care reform. In these stories, the now well-known phrases are routinely mentioned: Momentum is building, the stars are aligned, the coalitions are in high gear and Congress is working fast and furiously to develop a consensus plan.

The Catholic Health Association has produced a video that builds on that momentum and highlights the nation's hopes for health care in a creative way. The video, scheduled to debut June 7 at this year's Catholic Health Assembly in New Orleans, is now available at www.chausa.org. With the nation increasingly demanding that our health care system be more inclusive, fair, safe and affordable, we believe the time has never been more ideal to ask people what they want and expect from the change that is upon us.

The primary goal of the video is to encourage people – within the ministry and outside of it – to think about their dreams for our nation's

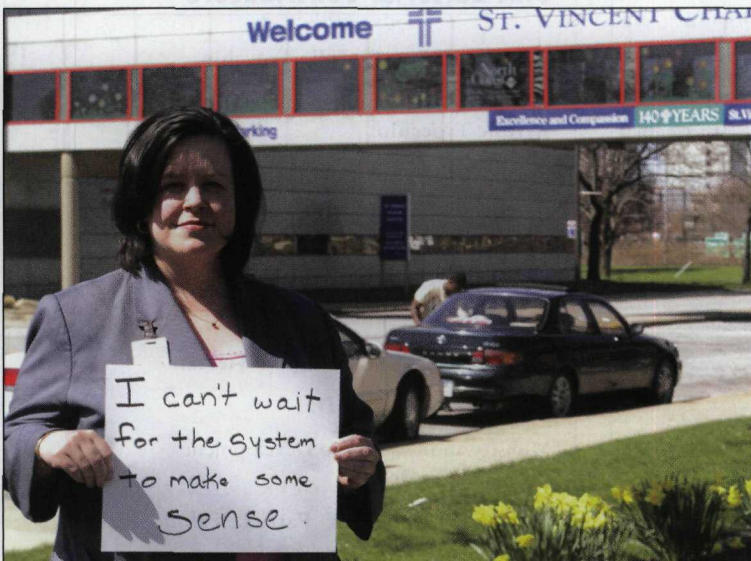
health care system. We asked people to submit photographs for the video, which features an individual or group sharing visions for a better and more sustainable health care system. The video project became a ministry and community engagement activity.

The photographs we solicited begin with the phrase, "I can't wait" Some examples of messages we received: I can't wait to help anyone and everyone who needs it; I can't wait for my Mom's multiple sclerosis care to be covered; We can't wait for a cure for breast cancer; I can't wait for the end of health care disparities. The phrases show how important health care reform is to families, communities and our nation's overall health.

The photographs are more touching than we could have imagined when we embarked on this effort. At least 200 people in groups small and large made photographs and, at the same time, gave serious personal thought to health care reform. For instance, a vice president in a Catholic health care system shared the request for photographs with his wife, a school teacher who then asked her students to envision a better health care system and to contribute their ideas for the future to our video. The images are spectacular, and the messages from the children are so powerful, imaginative and real.

In other photos, groups of nurses and physicians spent time developing their messages and creating their signs. And in others, families took time to think together about health care and craft messages which were personally meaningful – and which will resonate with others facing similar circumstances. We hope the faces and messages in the video powerfully express the urgency of making those dreams come true.

This video is also intended to spark a "viral campaign" through which our message can reach hundreds, thousands or even millions of people on the Internet. After all, social media and networking technology are playing a greater role each day in how we exchange information. Blogs and Facebook pages are one thing, but com-



Robin Bachman, who appears in the CHA video, is the director of public policy and government affairs at Sisters of Charity Health System, Cleveland.



One organization supporting the video project is Catholic Healthcare West. This photo shows Lloyd Dean (holding sign, right), president and CEO of Catholic Healthcare West and CHA Board chairman, and members of the health system's executive team.

elling video has a way of moving rapidly across the Internet if it strikes a chord with even a few people.

A recent example, the Girl Effect video (www.girleffect.org), is a product of a multi-foundation effort to create an advocacy movement on ending poverty in Africa. The video, which is a stunning collection of images and text, highlights the “powerful social and economic change brought about when girls have the opportunity to participate in their society.”

On YouTube, the Girl Effect video has been viewed more than 300,000 times. Other advocacy groups have similarly used this platform to share a message and inspire support for a cause. If we are successful with our reform video, its potential reach is without boundaries.

We will need the ministry to help us with the “viral” distribution of the CHA video. We recommend that people across the Catholic health ministry post the video on their intranets and organization websites, send it to friends and colleagues, or show it during a community presentation or health care discussion forum.

The video is only the beginning. We will continue to collect images and stories and use the Internet and other forums to facilitate conversations on reform within the ministry as well as with coalition partners, dioceses and community

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organizations. Visit the CHA website for details as reform discussion heats up and new opportunities arise for our contribution and unique, faith-based perspective.

By the time this issue goes to press, we will probably not know exactly where health care reform will go, and what the legislation and the resulting change will look like. What we do know, however, is that the awesome voice of Catholic health care can be brought to the discussion, as it has been for so many critical issues to our ministry and our nation.

Thanks so much to all who participated in the making of our “I can’t wait” video — and to those who will join the dialogue and advocacy efforts in the coming months. ■



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