



A Passionate Voice for Compassionate Care®

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The Catholic Health Association responds to the Community Catalyst report “Bigger and Bigger: The Growth of Large Catholic Health Systems.”

*Statement by Sr. Mary Haddad, RSM, President and Chief Executive Officer,
Catholic Health Association of the United States*

WASHINGTON, DC – The Catholic Health Association (CHA) questions the premise and accuracy of the Community Catalyst report “*Bigger and Bigger: The Growth of Large Catholic Health Systems.*” As the report states, “nearly all Catholic hospitals have joined systems rather than remaining independent, potentially improving their stability in unsettled times.” We believe that strength and stability for Catholic health care is an advantage, as we’ve seen during a global pandemic. As the virus spiked in different parts of the country, Catholic hospitals and health systems were able to shift resources and staff to ensure patients had access to ICU beds, emergency care and mental health services. We’ve been sharing quality and safety learnings to help improve outcomes and the standards of care, at scale, both now and pre-pandemic. Even before COVID-19, delivering care as part of a health system enabled our members to extend our healing mission more efficiently and effectively to more people, with special attention to caring for patients who are poor and vulnerable.

While more independent Catholic hospitals have joined health systems during the past two decades, just as non-Catholic hospitals have done, the number of Catholic hospitals has remained relatively stable. In 2000 there were 623 Catholic hospitals. Currently there are 668, representing one-in-seven acute-care hospital beds in the U.S. Unfortunately, this report changed the criteria for what defines a Catholic hospital during the past 20 years, which the authors acknowledge in their methodology section.

For over 150 years, Catholic health care has always responded where there has been a need for health care. As government and for-profit owned rural hospitals are closing, potentially eliminating all care in those communities, Catholic rural hospitals, 95% of which are part of Catholic health systems, have been able to ensure continued access to care in these vulnerable communities because of our mission to serve those most in need and ability to control overhead costs as part of a system. Our members are also investing billions of dollars on services for the poor and the health of our communities. We are proud of our ongoing commitment to deliver and advocate for high quality, affordable care to all. We are also proud of our long-standing partnerships with local leaders to provide health care services that address community needs.

During COVID-19, Catholic hospitals are providing essential health care services to communities across the country. From treating the first confirmed coronavirus patient in the U.S., Catholic hospitals and long-term care facilities have been on the frontlines of care throughout this pandemic. Catholic health systems have also worked to ensure free coronavirus testing in underserved neighborhoods, provided care and partnered with local food banks to support patients with underlying health conditions or living in areas identified as food deserts.

CHA has partnered with Community Catalyst in advocating for policies that strengthen programs that improve health outcomes and support community benefit initiatives. Community Catalyst has also worked closely with CHA members to improve community health and well-being. While we are disappointed with how the report presents data on Catholic health care, we remain committed to collaborating with Community Catalyst and other organizations working to improve the health of our nation during this unprecedented public health crisis.

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The Catholic Health Association of the United States is the national leadership organization of the Catholic health ministry, representing the largest nonprofit provider of health care services in the nation.

- *1 in 7 patients in the U.S. is cared for in a Catholic hospital each day.*
- *Catholic health care, which includes more than 2,200 hospitals, nursing homes, long-term care facilities, systems, sponsors, and related organizations, serves the full continuum of health care across our nation.*
- *Learn more at www.chausa.org.*