



Office of the President

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Cardinal Francis George, OMI
Archbishop of Chicago

November 17, 2009

The U.S. House of Representatives has advanced major legislation to provide adequate and affordable health care to all. The Catholic Bishops of the United States have long advocated that adequate health care be made available to everyone. In an essential step, the House voted overwhelmingly to reaffirm the longstanding and widely supported precedent that no federal funds will be used to pay for elective abortions. In doing so, the Representatives honored President Obama's commitment to the Congress and the nation that health care reform would not become a vehicle for expanding abortion funding or mandates. The Conference will remain vigilant and involved throughout this entire process to assure that these essential provisions are maintained and included in the final legislation. We will work to persuade the Senate to follow the example of the House and include these critical safeguards in their version of health care reform legislation. We also thank the members of the House who took this courageous and principled step to oppose measures that would force Americans to pay for the destruction of unborn children, and the Democratic leadership for allowing the Representatives to vote on this amendment that protects the common good.

In the national discussion on how to provide the best kind of health care, we bishops do not claim or present ourselves as experts on health care policy. We are not prepared to assess every provision of legislation as complex as this proposal. However, health care legislation, with all of its political, technical and economic aspects, is about human beings and hence has serious moral dimensions. Our focus is on the reality of families with children, the poor and the elderly, the mother carrying a child in her womb, those with limited or no means of access to doctors. Our Catholic commitment to health care picks up the pieces of our failing system in our emergency rooms, clinics, parishes and communities. All this

undergirds our commitment that our nation's health care system needs reform which protects human life and dignity and serves the poor and vulnerable as a moral imperative and an urgent national priority.

We remain deeply concerned about the debate that now moves to the Senate, especially as it will affect the poor and vulnerable, and those at the beginning and end of life. We will continue to insist that health care reform legislation must protect conscience rights. We support measures to make health care more affordable for low-income people and the uninsured. We remain deeply concerned that immigrants be treated fairly and not lose the health care coverage that they now have. We will continue to raise our voices in public and in prayer; we ask our people to join us in making the moral case for genuine health care reform that protects the life, dignity, consciences and health of all.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Francis Cardinal George". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the right of the typed name.

Francis Cardinal George, O.M.I.
Archbishop of Chicago
President