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October 29, 2009

Dear Pastors and Parish Administrators,

We are at a critical juncture in the national health care debate. Please give this letter and the accompanying materials urgent and high priority in your parish bulletin and distribution system, including your parish web site and email network if available and possible.

Blessed Pope John XXIII included medical care as a human right in his 1963 encyclical, *Pacem in Terris*. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops supports health care as a basic human right and has called for national health care reform for decades.

The national health care reform legislation currently being debated in the U.S. Congress does not meet the bishops' principles and priorities that health care should protect life, protect the consciences of health care providers, not expand abortion with public funding or insurance mandates and provide access for all with a special concern for the poor and inclusion of legal immigrants.

Enclosed please find explanatory materials with pertinent and succinct messages for communication to Kentucky's U.S. Senators and Representatives.

Please bring these materials and messages to the immediate attention of your parishioners and have copies freely available in your church.

May God bless you abundantly for your and your parishioners' efforts in defense of life and their actions in solidarity with their fellow Catholics across the Commonwealth of Kentucky and the United States.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ Most Reverend Joseph E. Kurtz
Archbishop of Louisville

+ Most Reverend Roger J. Foy
Bishop of Covington

Very Reverend J. Michael Clark, J.C.L.
Diocesan Administrator
Diocese of Owensboro

+ Most Reverend Ronald W. Gainer
Bishop of Lexington

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J. Michael Clark, J.C.L.
Diocesan Administrator
Diocese of Owensboro

Robert J. Castagna
Executive Director



United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

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Urgent Memorandum

Date: October 28, 2009

From: Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development, Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities, Office of Migration and Refugee Policy, Office of the Secretary of Communications

To: Pastors, Diocesan Pro-Life Directors, Diocesan Social Development Directors, Diocesan Communications Directors, State Catholic Conference Directors

Re: URGENT: Nationwide USCCB Bulletin Insert on Health Care Reform

For many years, the U.S. bishops have supported decent health care for all based on our teaching that health care is essential for human life and dignity and on the Church's experience in providing health care and assisting those without coverage. Specifically, the bishops have clearly required that longstanding federal protections that restrict abortion funding and mandates and that protect conscience rights must be reflected in health reform legislation. In addition, the bishops have focused on efforts to insure that coverage is affordable to families and that immigrants have better health care as a result of reform. We seek reform that protects the life, dignity and health care of all.

The President of the Conference and the Chairmen of the three major USCCB committees engaged in health care reform have written all the bishops and asked that the attached USCCB Nationwide Bulletin Insert on health care reform be printed or hand-stuffed in every parish bulletin and/or distributed in pews or at church entrances as soon as possible. Congressional votes may take place as soon as early November. If your Arch/bishop is not in agreement with disseminating the bulletin insert, you will be hearing from your Arch/diocese immediately.

Also included are suggested Pulpit Announcements and a Prayer Petition. Please encourage parishioners to pray for this effort as well. More information can be found at www.usccb.org/healthcare.

Thank you for your urgent actions and prayers on behalf of this nationwide effort!



United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

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USCCB NATIONWIDE BULLETIN INSERT

Tell Congress: Remove Abortion Funding & Mandates from Needed Health Care Reform

Congress is preparing to debate health care reform legislation on the House and Senate floors. Genuine health care reform should protect the life and dignity of all people from the moment of conception until natural death. The U.S. bishops' conference has concluded that all committee-approved bills are seriously deficient on the issues of abortion and conscience, and do not provide adequate access to health care for immigrants and the poor. The bills will have to change or the bishops have pledged to oppose them.

Our nation is at a crossroads. Policies adopted in health care reform will have an impact for good or ill for years to come. None of the bills retains longstanding current policies against abortion funding or abortion coverage mandates, and none fully protects conscience rights in health care.

As the U.S. bishops' letter of October 8 states:

“No one should be required to pay for or participate in abortion. It is essential that the legislation clearly apply to this new program longstanding and widely supported federal restrictions on abortion funding and mandates, and protections for rights of conscience. No current bill meets this test.... If acceptable language in these areas cannot be found, we will have to oppose the health care bill vigorously.”

For the full text of this letter and more information on proposed legislation and the bishops' advocacy for authentic health care reform, visit: www.usccb.org/healthcare.

Congressional leaders are attempting to put together final bills for floor consideration. Please contact your Representative and Senators today and urge them to fix these bills with the pro-life amendments noted below. Otherwise much needed health care reform will have to be opposed. Health care reform should be about saving lives, not destroying them.

ACTION: Contact Members through e-mail, phone calls or FAX letters.

- To send a pre-written, instant e-mail to Congress go to www.usccb.org/action.
- Call the U.S. Capitol switchboard at: 202-224-3121, or call your Members' local offices.
- Full contact info can be found on Members' web sites at www.house.gov & www.senate.gov.

MESSAGE to SENATE:

“During floor debate on the health care reform bill, please support an amendment to incorporate longstanding policies against abortion funding and in favor of conscience rights. If these serious concerns are not addressed, the final bill should be opposed.”

MESSAGE to HOUSE:

“Please support the Stupak Amendment that addresses essential pro-life concerns on abortion funding and conscience rights in the health care reform bill. Help ensure that the Rule for the bill allows a vote on this amendment. If these serious concerns are not addressed, the final bill should be opposed.”

WHEN: Both House and Senate are preparing for floor votes now. **Act today! Thank you!**

USCCB Nationwide Bulletin Insert

Pulpit Announcements & Prayer Petition

Instructions: As introduced by a cover letter to all bishops from the President of the Conference and the Chairmen of the 3 major USCCB committees engaged in health care reform, the US bishops have asked that the USCCB Nationwide Bulletin Insert on health care reform be printed or hand-stuffed in every parish bulletin and/or distributed in pews or at church entrances as soon as possible. Congressional votes may take place as soon as early November. Please encourage parishioners to pray for this effort as well. More information can be found at www.usccb.org/healthcare.

To be announced at all Masses on the weekend when the Bulletin Insert is distributed:

Congress is preparing to debate health care reform legislation. The Catholic bishops of the United States strongly support genuine health care reform that protects the life and dignity of all, from the moment of conception until natural death. However, all current bills are seriously deficient on abortion and conscience rights, and do not yet provide adequate access to health care for immigrants and the poor.

In your pews/bulletins today, you'll find a special flier/bulletin insert from the US Bishops Conference asking you to please contact your Representative and Senators immediately and urge them to fix these bills with pro-life amendments. The flier/bulletin insert includes a web address that allows you to send an email message to Congress with a click of a button. The bishops have asked for our swift action and the commitment of our prayers for this critical effort. Thank you for your help. We can help make sure that health care reform will be about saving lives, not destroying them.

To be announced at all Masses on the weekend following the Bulletin Insert distribution:

Congress is preparing to debate health care reform legislation. The Catholic bishops of the United States strongly support genuine health care reform that protects the life and dignity of all, from the moment of conception until natural death. However, all current bills are seriously deficient on abortion and conscience rights, and do not yet provide adequate access to health care for immigrants and the poor.

Last weekend you received a special flier/bulletin insert from the US Bishops Conference asking you to please contact your Representative and Senators immediately and urge them to fix these bills with pro-life amendments. The flier/bulletin insert included a web address that allows you to send an email message to Congress with a click of a button. Additional fliers/bulletin inserts can be found at _____ (back of church, etc.). The bishops have asked for our swift action and the commitment of our prayers for this critical effort. Thank you for your help. We can help make sure that health care reform will be about saving lives, not destroying them.

Suggested Prayer of the Faithful:

That Congress will act to ensure that needed health care reform will truly protect the life, dignity and health care of all and that we will raise our voices to protect the unborn and the most vulnerable and to preserve our freedom of conscience. We pray to the Lord.

HEALTH CARE REFORM IS ABOUT SAVING LIVES, NOT DESTROYING THEM.

Abortion is not health care because killing is not healing.

For over 30 years, the Hyde Amendment and other longstanding and widely supported laws have prevented federal funding of elective abortions.

Yet health care reform bills advancing in Congress violate this policy.

Americans would be forced to subsidize abortions through their taxes and health insurance premiums.

We need genuine health care reform—reform that helps save lives, not destroy them.

**Tell Congress:
“Remove Abortion Funding
and Mandates from Needed
Health Care Reform!”**

**Visit www.usccb.org/action
to send your e-mails today.**

For more information on the U.S. bishops' advocacy for authentic Health Care Reform, visit www.usccb.org/healthcare.

