



## United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

3211 FOURTH STREET NE • WASHINGTON DC 20017-1194 • 202-541-3000

WEBSITE: WWW.USCCB.ORG • FAX 202-541-3339

March 30, 2017

United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

The withdrawal of the *American Health Care Act* (AHCA) by the U.S. House of Representatives must not end our nation's efforts to improve health care. It was widely accepted that the AHCA contained serious deficiencies, particularly in its **changes to Medicaid**, that would have impacted the poor and others most in need in unacceptable ways, including an estimated 24 million Americans who would be without healthcare. These and other provisions needed to be reworked by Congress before the bill could be passed.

Yet, other problems and barriers to **access and affordability** within the current health care system still remain. Many families struggle under the weight of growing costs and high insurance premiums. These difficulties are poised to intensify. Immigrants, including the undocumented, face serious barriers to access. Some small business health models that provide responsive care to individuals and families are struggling to survive. Payment and cost control structures in various programs need to be addressed.

The AHCA did provide **critical life protections** for the unborn, however. By restricting federal funding for abortion, its providers, and the purchase of plans that cover it, the bill would have finally resolved a grave moral failing rooted within the very structure of the *Affordable Care Act* (ACA). Our nation's health care laws will continue to fall short of the common good if they imbed within them the idea that some lives have less value than others.

Neither the AHCA nor the ACA provided **conscience protections** for those who participate in the delivery or coverage of health care services. Such safeguards are still essential and should extend to all stakeholders, including insurers, purchasers, sponsors, and providers. They must also protect against regulations that mandate provision or coverage of objectionable services and procedures.

Lawmakers still have a duty to confront these significant challenges. While a comprehensive approach is preferable, some of the problems can be fixed with more narrow reforms, and in a bipartisan way. Congress can pass the *Conscience Protection Act*, extend full "**Hyde Amendment**" protections to the ACA, and enact other targeted laws that begin to **remove current and impending health care barriers**, if a more extensive effort is not possible. We urge members of Congress to seize this moment to create a new spirit of bipartisanship and make these necessary reforms.

Sincerely,

His Eminence Timothy Cardinal Dolan  
Archbishop of New York  
Chairman, Committee on Pro-Life Activities

Most Rev. William E. Lori  
Archbishop of Baltimore  
Chairman, Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty

Most Rev. Frank J. Dewane  
Bishop of Venice  
Chairman, Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development



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March 30, 2017

United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

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