



Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development

3211 FOURTH STREET NE • WASHINGTON DC 20017-1194 • 202-541-3160

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

October 4, 2017

United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senator:

As Congress seeks to prioritize its work for the remainder of the year, reauthorizing the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) is essential for the good of our nation's children. Pope Francis said, "Health care is not a consumer good, but a human right, and access to health care cannot be a privilege." Pope Benedict XVI, like his successor Pope Francis, reaffirmed that health care is a human right and emphasized that the modern conception of health care "encourages an adequate family and social environment." This is especially true for CHIP, which ensures that all families can provide their children with the health care that they need to grow and flourish.

The Catholic Church in the United States has a long tradition of working toward affordable and accessible health care for all, especially the most vulnerable members of our society, our children. The Catholic community is the largest nongovernmental provider of health care and human services in the nation. Those in need are served in our emergency rooms, hospitals, and clinics, and in our soup kitchens, shelters, and Catholic Charities agencies.

Since its inception in 1997, CHIP has garnered widespread support from both parties and from an overwhelming majority of the nation's governors and state legislatures. CHIP has been a reliable source of coverage for low-income children in working families whose parents earn too much to qualify for Medicaid, but too little to afford private health insurance. Since 2009, expansions of Medicaid and CHIP have helped to reduce the children's uninsured rate to a record low of 5%. Children enrolled in Medicaid and CHIP make up 50.3% of enrollees in Medicaid and CHIP programs, as of June 2017. Studies have shown that Medicaid and CHIP provide better access to dental, vision, and other services for children than even plans offered on the exchange marketplace.

If CHIP funding is not renewed, Arizona, Minnesota, North Carolina, and the District of Columbia will run out of their federal CHIP funding by the end of the year. By March 2018, an additional 27 states would follow. CHIP must be extended to ensure adequate, affordable coverage and a responsible transition for children toward family coverage.

As Catholic organizations committed to the principles of Catholic social teaching, the sanctity of human life, from conception to natural death, and the inherent dignity of every human being are central concerns. Access to adequate health care is a basic human right, necessary both for the development and maintenance of life and for the ability of human beings to flourish

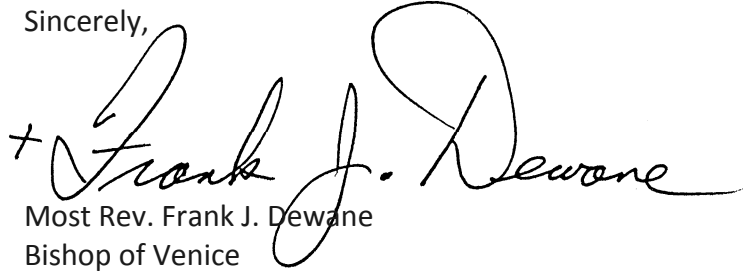
Letter to U.S. Senate

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according to their inherent dignity. Congress should take action to provide certainty on the future of the CHIP program this year.

Sincerely,

+ Handwritten signature of Frank J. Dewane in black ink, featuring a large, stylized initial 'F' and 'D'.

Most Rev. Frank J. Dewane

Bishop of Venice

Chairman, Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops



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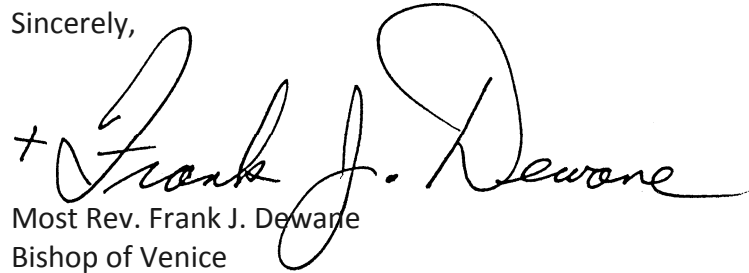
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according to their inherent dignity. Congress should take action to provide certainty on the future of the CHIP program this year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Frank J. Dewane". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent loop at the end of the name.

Most Rev. Frank J. Dewane

Bishop of Venice

Chairman, Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development

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