



Catholic  
Charities  
USA



Office of  
Domestic  
Social  
Development



September 27, 2005

The Honorable Charles Grassley  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Max Baucus  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Grassley and Baucus:

On behalf of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Catholic Charities USA, and the Catholic Health Association of the United States, we are writing to thank you for your efforts to ensure that victims of Hurricane Katrina will receive the medical care they need and urge the Senate to act quickly to accomplish that goal.

The needs of the thousands of affected families and individuals in the wake of Hurricane Katrina are significant and varied, immediate and long-term. Government and charitable organizations around the nation, including Catholic Charities agencies, Catholic healthcare facilities and Catholic dioceses and parishes, have been working to bring assistance in the form of medical care, food, water, temporary shelter, and social services to the many whose lives have been upended and overwhelmed by Katrina

In particular, we are pleased that you propose to provide health care coverage to low-income Katrina survivors regardless of categorical eligibility under Medicaid, and to provide 100 percent federal Medicaid payments for all eligible Katrina victims in every state. We also applaud your streamlining of Medicaid eligibility and enrollment procedures to facilitate access to care for many Katrina victims.

In response to the disaster, the federal government can and should act to implement a health services strategy that ensures immediate access to health services for low-income and newly impoverished individuals affected by Hurricane Katrina. We applaud the Administration and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) for its expeditious response to make health services available to those in need, and for doing everything that the agency is authorized to do, including the use of state waivers, under current law in order to extend health care coverage to individuals in need following the Katrina disaster. However, we believe it is necessary to create seamless eligibility for the victims of Hurricane Katrina across state lines and to allow the government to ensure full federal funding of health care services for all Katrina victims, wherever they may be.

September 27, 2005  
Page Two

In addition, we are pleased that you would make additional Temporary Assistance for Needy Families resources available to affected states, and would allow Katrina survivors to receive benefits without being subject to time limits or work requirements. We also welcome the emergency extension of unemployment compensation benefits for 13 weeks, and urge Congress to consider providing an additional 13 weeks of emergency benefits to assist Katrina survivors unable to find work during what could be a long-term reconstruction effort.

Finally, we urge Congress to make Katrina-related emergency benefits available to non-citizen victims of Katrina, as well as citizens.

As organizations united by faith and committed to the principles of Catholic social teaching, we believe a just society is one that protects and promotes the fundamental rights of its members – with special attention to meeting the basic needs, including the need for safe and affordable health care, of the poor, vulnerable and underserved. Our faith insists that the poor and vulnerable should have first claim on our common efforts. They cannot be left behind once again. Thank you for your efforts to attend quickly to the needs of Katrina's victims.

Sincerely,



Most Rev. Nicholas DiMarzio, Ph.D., D.D.  
Bishop of Brooklyn  
Chairman, Domestic Policy Committee  
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops



Rev. Larry Snyder  
President  
Catholic Charities USA



Michael Rodgers  
Interim President and CEO  
Catholic Health Association  
of the United States