



Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development

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May 23, 2011

Chairman Fred Upton
Energy and Commerce Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member Henry Waxman
Energy and Commerce Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

RE: State Flexibility Act (H.R. 1683)

Dear Chairman Upton and Ranking Member Waxman:

I write on behalf of the Catholic bishops of the United States to express concern that if the *State Flexibility Act* (H.R. 1683) were enacted into law the health care coverage of hundreds of thousands of children, pregnant women, elderly adults and people with disabilities could be threatened.

For many decades, the Catholic bishops of the United States have affirmed our strong support for universal access to health care. Basic health care for all is a moral imperative, not yet completely achieved. We remain committed to improving and remedying the flaws in the Patient Protection and Affordability Act. Also, the bishops have supported provisions of the State Children's Health Insurance Program and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act which allow more poor and vulnerable people to gain access to health care coverage. These are efforts of which our nation should be proud.

The provisions of the *State Flexibility Act* would severely undermine the ability of our nation to ensure access to quality, affordable, life-giving health care for all, by allowing states to roll back their Medicaid and SCHIP programs to levels that could threaten the life and dignity of poor and vulnerable people. The non-partisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates that 300,000 people, two-thirds of whom are children, would lose health care coverage if this bill were enacted into law. Our nation has made great strides over the last 15 years in health care coverage for children and pregnant women, and current coverage is the highest in our nation's history. Congress should not pass legislation that would erode this progress.

I ask you to oppose any efforts to jeopardize the health care coverage of anyone, especially children, pregnant women, people with disabilities and the elderly.

Sincerely,

Most Reverend Stephen E. Blaire
Bishop of Stockton
Chairman, Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development