

Bishop Malooly's Statement on Health Care Reform

Congress and the Administration are currently engaged in an effort to create a health care reform bill. It is a teaching of the Catholic Church that society has the duty to provide care to those who cannot help themselves. The Bishops of this country have clearly stated that government has a responsibility to assure access to basic health care for all people.



While the Bishops do support health care reform, we do not support any specific health care bill or health care plan. However, we Bishops have taken a clear stand on what should and should not be included in any health care reform legislation.

First, whatever health care plan is developed must assure there is access to basic health care for all people. Additionally, any plan must assure that the poor and the vulnerable have easy access.

Second, any health care plan cannot include any direct or indirect funding for abortion. Currently the law of the United States under the Hyde Amendment prevents the federal government from funding abortion except in certain limited circumstances. Any health care reform bill that passes must contain a similar limitation providing that no insurance plan which receives any money from the federal government may fund abortion. In addition, no one should be required to pay for health care insurance that pays for abortion. These restrictions need to be expressly stated in any health care reform legislation.

Third, there must be assurances that the legislation does not include any direct or indirect funding for activities that encourage the withdrawal of medical procedures or assistance for the purpose of causing death. Catholics reject both active euthanization which means taking steps that will cause death as well as passive euthanization which means withholding treatment for the purpose of causing death.

Finally, any health care reform bill must expressly support the right of health care professionals and institutions to refuse to perform, participate in, or refer patients for procedures that violate their individual or institutional consciences. No health care professional or institution should be required to have anything to do with abortion, euthanasia of any type, or any other practice or procedure that violates conscience.

I urge you to contact your senators and representatives to ask them to assure any legislation they consider respects life, has easy access for the poor, and respects conscience. As we make our voices heard in Washington, I ask you to join me in prayer that the Holy Spirit will guide our legislators in creating a true health care reform.

Most Rev. W. Francis Malooly
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