



FLORIDA CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

The nonpartisan public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Florida

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EXPANDING COVERAGE FOR THE UNINSURED

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Society tends to view health care services as a commodity; directing health resources in ways that make care for some exceptional, and at times excessive, while others still lack basic care. However, access to health care is an essential human good for everyone.

Church's Mission is Shaped by a Simple, Fundamental Principle

As outlined by Saint Pope John XXIII's teaching in *Pacem in Terris*, access to a reasonable standard of health care meets the criteria of basic human rights: "(every person) has the right to bodily integrity and to the means necessary for the proper development of life, particularly food, clothing, shelter, medical care, rest, and, finally, the necessary social services." This theme has continued to be advanced by our Holy Fathers who have followed Saint Pope John XXIII and the United States and Florida bishops.

This right to health care flows from the sanctity of human life and the dignity that belongs to all human persons who are made in the image and likeness of God. Our constant teaching that each human life must be protected and human dignity promoted leads us to insist that all people have the right to health care.

Government Has Role to Play in Ensuring Equitable Access to Care

As the Florida Legislature convenes, attention to the plight of the uninsured in our state is required. With nearly four million Floridians currently uninsured, disparities between rich and poor, and those who are insured and uninsured, have resulted in a health care system that is inequitable and unjust. We call upon our elected officials to forge health care policies that provide access to adequate and affordable care for all Floridians, with particular attention to the needs the economically disadvantaged, those with chronic diseases and children

Clear Inconsistencies Exist Between Insured and Uninsured Populations

Approximately 1 million Floridians who have incomes below 138% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) do not qualify for the federal subsidized health coverage. Unlike those with coverage, these "working poor" have little access to primary care and regular, preventive care. Limited funds are directed to the basic necessities like housing and food. Medical care is obtained in urgent care centers or emergency departments. Their inability to pay for care brings increased strain, stress and stigma, while extended periods of untreated illness may lead to exacerbated symptoms, lost wages and unemployment. The cost of uncompensated care, estimated in 2012 to be \$3 billion, is shifted in the form of a "hidden tax" to the business community and individuals with insurance coverage.

FCCB Supports Specific Proposals to Expand Coverage

Current opportunities for our state to expand coverage to the uninsured include:

Federal/State Collaboration

- Utilize federal and state funds to cover persons with incomes below 138% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) to provide coverage to approximately one million uninsured Floridians who do not otherwise qualify for subsidized health coverage.

KidCare Expansion for Legal Immigrant Children

- Remove the five-year waiting period to apply for the Florida KidCare Program for approximately 19,500 lawfully residing immigrant children and maintain the exclusion of eligibility for undocumented immigrants of any age.