

Archbishop O'Brien Calls for Revision of Current Health Care Bill

For decades, the Catholic bishops of the United States have been and continue to be consistent and strong advocates for comprehensive health care reform that leads to health care for all, including the weakest and most vulnerable.

In anticipation of a possible final vote on the U.S. Senate's health care reform bill, Archbishop Edwin F. O'Brien called for transparency throughout the voting process in both houses of Congress, and encouraged Catholics in the Archdiocese of Baltimore to urge their elected officials in Congress to work to uphold provisions against abortion funding, to include full conscience protection and to ensure that health care is accessible and affordable for all.

"Anything short of this would be unacceptable and irresponsible on the part of our elected officials," Archbishop O'Brien said. "The American people and the Catholic bishops have been told repeatedly that no federal funds would be used for abortion in any final bill. This is not the case. The Senate bill would depart from longstanding principles of the Hyde Amendment, which has enjoyed bipartisan support for more than three decades and would expand federal funding and the role of the federal government in the provision of abortion procedures. If allowed to stand, the Senate bill would constitute the most far-reaching relaxation of abortion law since *Roe vs. Wade*."

The Archbishop also cited the Catholic Church's social justice teaching, which supports the principle of subsidiarity; the Church believes that decisions should be made as close to those effected by them as possible, commensurate with the common good. This is especially true "of the conscience-laden decisions often involved in health care," the Archbishop noted.

The Archbishop echoed the statement issued earlier this week by Cardinal Francis George, Archbishop of Chicago and President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Cardinal George, speaking on behalf of the U.S. Bishops said, "Two basic principles continue to shape the concerns of the Catholic bishops: health

care means taking care of the health needs of all, across the human life span; and the expansion of health care should not involve the expansion of abortion funding and of policies forcing everyone to pay for abortions. Because these principles have not been respected, despite the good that the bill under consideration intends or might achieve, the Catholic bishops regretfully hold that it must be opposed unless and until these serious moral problems are addressed.”

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