

Archbishop O'Brien comments on Senate's passage of health care reform bill

Archbishop Edwin F. O'Brien released the following statement Dec. 24, after the U.S. Senate passed its version of a health care reform bill:

"As expected, Maryland's two U.S. senators were among the 60 members of the U.S. Senate this morning to approve a version of health care reform legislation that sadly falls short in three areas of critical importance to the Catholic community: respect for life, affordability/access, and inclusion of immigrants.

"The undoing of federal policies on abortion in the Senate bill is particularly alarming, and reflects a significant difference from provisions - included in the House bill - that simply maintain the status quo in this area." "The bill also does not adequately protect conscience rights, does not adequately allow for access for all immigrant families, and still leaves 23 million Americans uninsured. Until these concerns are addressed, the version approved today by the Senate demands our opposition. "There are many who should be commended for their committed involvement and good-faith efforts to date to move our country closer to the laudable goal of health care reform.

"I also wish to applaud the thousands of constituents in Maryland and throughout the country who have continued, even as we draw so close to Christmas Day, to communicate their concerns to their elected officials. I pray that those efforts will bear fruit in the New Year, and that the House and Senate will come to agreement on a final bill that can be supported by all those who have worked so hard to achieve genuine reform without sacrificing basic moral principles."