



**STATEMENT OF THE
LOUISIANA CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS
ON
HEALTH CARE REFORM
OCTOBER 26, 2009**

The Louisiana Conference of Catholic Bishops recognizes the need to reform access to health care in the United States. The Catholic Church has been and continues to be an advocate for health care reform that provides medical care for all in an accessible and affordable manner.

According to church teaching, health care is not merely a privilege, but a basic human right. In *Pacem in Terris*, Pope John XXIII stated that "rights are universal and inviolable, and therefore altogether inalienable." These include, but are not limited to, the "right to medical care," and "to be looked after in the event of ill health." The New Testament Scriptures further reveal an apostolic duty, commanded by Jesus, to heal the sick while proclaiming the Gospel (MT 10: 7-8).

For centuries, Catholic hospitals have served and ministered to the sick and the dying. Other Catholic institutions have welcomed and served the elderly, handicapped, expectant mothers, newborns, and others with physical, emotional or spiritual needs. This is an important expression of our respect for the innate dignity that lies within every human being, regardless of race, nationality, religion, political opinion, or social class.

This respect for life and dignity directs us to urge congress to support reforms that:

Exclude public health care monies for abortion;

Prohibit any form of euthanasia;

Protect the right of conscience of a health care professional or institution; and

Respect the right of a physician and a patient to decide treatment for the healing of that patient without interference.

Finally, in shaping public policy on access to health care, we appeal to congress for a plan that ensures basic affordable medical care for all, including legal immigrants, and a plan that protects the role of personal and private entities in carrying out their health care mission.

The bishops urge that any health care plan embraces all of these principles, and invite all Catholics to pray for all legislators that they will be enlightened by God to know what is good for our society and particularly those in need.

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