



United States Conference of Catholic Bishops  
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December 14, 2009

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), we write to express our strong support for amendment #2991, offered by Senator Robert Menendez (D-NJ) to H.R. 3590, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. The amendment would give states the option to lift the five-year waiting period for legal immigrants to obtain Medicaid coverage.

The Catholic Bishops of the United States have long supported adequate and affordable health care for all. We continue to advocate for accessible, affordable and quality health care that protects and respects the life and dignity of all people from conception until natural death.

We believe that legal immigrants, who work, pay taxes, and are on a path to citizenship, should have access to health care services, such as Medicaid, for which they help pay. Moreover, providing low-income legal immigrants access to Medicaid would help ensure that the general public health of immigrant communities and the nation is served.

Although the legislation provides subsidies to low-income legal immigrants to purchase health care, it does not guarantee that they will be able to afford such coverage. Families living in or near poverty, regardless of their legal status, may have difficulty affording co-payments, prescription drugs, deductibles or additional treatments not provided for in insurance plans. As a result, some families may have to choose between health care coverage and food and shelter for their families. For many, Medicaid is their best option for accessing health care.

In our view, health care coverage should be accessible to all, regardless of whether they are citizens. The Menendez amendment would ensure adequate coverage to as many as 600,000 legal immigrants each year who otherwise may not be able to access such coverage.

I ask for your support of this important amendment.

Sincerely,

*Cardinal Daniel DiNardo + John C. Wester*

His Eminence Daniel Cardinal DiNardo  
Archbishop of Galveston-Houston  
Chairman, USCCB Committee on Pro-Life  
Activities

Most Rev. John C. Wester  
Bishop of Salt Lake City  
Chairman, USCCB Committee on Migration

*William F. Murphy*

Most Rev. William F. Murphy  
Bishop of Rockville Center  
Chairman, USCCB Domestic Policy Committee