



1042 Burlington Lane • Frankfort, KY 40601 • (502)875-4345 • FAX: (502)875-2841 • www.ccky.org

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CONTACT: Ed Monahan, Executive Director, 502-875-4345

KY Catholic Bishops urge commitment to provide basic health care for all Kentuckians

Frankfort (December 7, 2005) - Concerned about adequate funding for Medicaid and those many without health insurance, the four Kentucky Catholic Bishops have issued a Statement entitled, "Health Care is a Moral Right, a Safeguard of Human Life." Noting that it is morally unacceptable that 576,000 Kentuckians and 45 million Americans do not have health insurance, the Bishops are pressing to increase access to affordable health care to thousands of uninsured Kentuckians and the millions of uninsured in the United States.

The Bishops said, "The lack of access to affordable health care for so many children and adults in our country and in Kentucky is a structural injustice that harms people and undermines the common good." They call for new dedication to meet this injustice. "We urge Catholics, people of good will and our national and state leaders to look beyond special interests and partisanship and to unite our state and nation in a new commitment to meet the basic physical and behavioral health care needs of our people, especially the poor and vulnerable, pregnant women, the mentally ill, mentally retarded, children and adults in low-income families, the elderly, the disabled, immigrants and the undocumented. This effort acknowledges the moral right of all to health care, that health care is a safeguard of human life, and our obligation to work toward health care for all."

People who lack health insurance are less likely to receive basic health care services, and are generally in poorer health as a result. They delay seeking care even when in need of medical attention, do not fill prescriptions as they should and have trouble paying medical bills. The uninsured have more difficulty obtaining primary care and access to essential medication, and have a higher rate of hospitalization for treatable conditions such as hypertension, asthma or diabetes.

"We bishops of Kentucky," said Archbishop Thomas C. Kelly, O.P., chair of the Board of the Catholic Conference, "consider access to adequate health care to be a basic human right, necessary for the development and maintenance of life and for the ability of human beings to realize the fullness of their dignity. A just society is one that protects and promotes the fundamental rights of its members with special attention to meeting the basic needs of the poor and underserved, including the need for affordable health care."

A copy of "Health Care is a Moral Right, a Safeguard of Human Life" is found at www.ccky.org/

The Catholic Conference of KY is an agency of the Catholic Bishops, established in 1983. It speaks for the Church in matters of public policy, serves as liaison to government and the legislature, and coordinates communications and activities between the church and secular agencies. The Bishops of the four dioceses of KY constitute its Board of Directors.