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Catholic Bishops Urge Governor to use surplus money for Medicaid

Frankfort (December 8, 2005) – The four Catholic Bishops of Kentucky have written Governor Ernie Fletcher and asked him to provide sufficient funding for the Medicaid program in the current fiscal year and in the coming biennium.

In part, the letter to the Governor said, “We understand that you face two important health care decisions: how to address the significant Medicaid deficit in the current fiscal year and how much funding to request of the 2006 General Assembly for Medicaid in the coming fiscal biennium. Since funding decisions reflect not only economic policies but also moral choices as well, we ask that you give priority in these budget decisions to the needs of poor and vulnerable people, especially pregnant women and their unborn children, the mentally ill, mentally retarded, children and adults in low-income families, the elderly, the disabled, and immigrants including the undocumented. . . . We understand that there are surplus funds available for allocation in the current fiscal year. We ask that you apply available surplus money to the Medicaid deficit to insure that anyone who relies on Medicaid for his or her health care does not lose coverage or access to vital medical services. We also ask that you make the request for sufficient funding for the Medicaid program a priority in your next biennium budget proposal.”

Ed Monahan, Executive Director of the Catholic Conference of Kentucky, explained that “the Bishops appreciate the administration’s efforts to create effective cost-containment measures that reduce waste, inefficiency, and unnecessary care, but want to make clear that basic health care is a moral right, the poor and vulnerable have the first claim on government’s assistance, and no sick person on Medicaid should be denied necessary health care.”

In addition to writing the Governor, the Bishops have issued a statement on health care urging “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. . . .”

A copy of the letter and of “Health Care is a Moral Right, a Safeguard of Human Life” are 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.