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March 28, 2013

Commissioner Lawrence Kissner
Cabinet for Health and Family Services
Department of Medicaid Services
275 East Main Street, 6W-A
Frankfort, KY 40601-2321

Re: Support for Medicaid Expansion

Dear Commissioner Kissner:

I am writing on behalf of the Catholic Conference of Kentucky which represents the state's four Roman Catholic dioceses in public policy matters. The Conference seeks to promote the common good for all Kentuckians. Catholic Social Teaching defines that broad term as the total of all conditions necessary—economic, political, material, and cultural—which allows all people to realize their human dignity and reach their full human potential.

Our church believes and teaches that health care is more than a commodity; it is a **basic human right**, an essential safeguard of human life and dignity. We believe our people's health care should not depend on where they work, how much their parents earn, or where they live. We measure governmental policies by asking this primary question: how will this affect poor persons? How will it help or harm vulnerable families, children, and those with disabilities?

We know about these vulnerable persons because we serve them through the many St. Vincent de Paul Societies attached to our parishes who work directly with poor persons, our four Catholic Charities agencies and numerous other outreach programs available in every part of the Commonwealth. The Catholic hospital network throughout the state provides care and comfort to all those who present themselves for treatment, many of them very poor and without insurance.

Most Reverend
Joseph E. Kurtz, D.D.
Archbishop of Louisville

Most Reverend
Roger J. Foys, D.D.
Bishop of Covington

Most Reverend
Ronald W. Gainer, D.D.
Bishop of Lexington

Most Reverend
William F. Medley, D.D.
Bishop of Owensboro

Reverend
Patrick Delahanty
Executive Director

It is in that context that the Conference wishes to see the state of Kentucky participate in the expansion of Medicaid to those persons whose incomes are below 138% of the federal poverty level. Kentucky has a unique opportunity to provide a significant number of low-income earners with health insurance through an expansion that is almost entirely paid for by the federal government.

As you certainly know, the disproportionate share payments are diminishing and will be completely phased out over time. If the Medicaid expansion opportunity is not taken advantage of and hospitals are faced with the loss of DSH payments, we fear that costs to all of us will increase or, worse, services to low-income persons dependent on emergency rooms for healthcare, could be reduced or cut entirely. This violates our understanding of what it means to be a society that promotes the common good.

We know this expansion means work and is complicated. It is complicated further because of the shift to managed care. At the time this transition was being considered, we feared that it would not go well and urged the Governor not to shift the responsibility of managing Medicaid to the private sector. That is now water under the bridge. However, some oppose the expansion of Medicaid because of the difficulties already facing consumers, providers, and the state.

The Medicaid expansion is too important for the provision of insurance to so many people in need to let these transition difficulties be an excuse for not taking advantage of this opportunity. Indeed, it is added reason to correct the problems in the current system and be in a position to improve the access to quality healthcare to an even greater number of Kentuckians.

On behalf of the Conference, I thank you for taking on this difficult task and serving in your important capacity as Commissioner. In addition, thank you also for giving our thoughts your consideration.

Sincerely,


Reverend Patrick Delahanty
Executive Director