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Health Care Must Place Poor, Vulnerable First, say Texas Bishops

AUSTIN--The Texas Catholic Conference, representing the Roman Catholic Bishops of Texas, has issued a statement emphasizing their support for genuine, life-affirming reform to our nation's health care system, while also expressing concern that current health care proposals fail to guarantee fundamental rights and protections for humans at all stages of life.

"Health care reform is a vital concern to us in Texas, as our state has one of the highest numbers of uninsured persons in the nation," say the Texas Bishops in the statement. The Bishops also emphasize the varied health care offerings of Catholic facilities in Texas, stating, "the Catholic Church in Texas brings both everyday experience and strong convictions to the issue of health care reform."

The statements cites following key concerns:

- Reform must restrict funding for abortion and respect the consciences of health care providers;
- Cost structures must not impose excessive financial burdens on low and moderate income individuals and families;
- Measures must safeguard the health of all of society, including the poor, the elderly, and immigrants;
- Legal immigrants and their families must be allowed timely access to comprehensive and affordable health care coverage; and
- An adequate safety net must be maintained for those who remain uncovered.

"Our work in Texas gives us multiple perspectives on the issue of health care reform," said Andrew Rivas, Texas Catholic Conference executive director. "We are employers and we are health care providers. We offer assistance to those who face hardship due to a lack of access to health care through our Catholic hospitals, nursing homes, and hospice care, as well as ministries such as Catholic Charities, Respect Life, and Immigrant Outreach. "

The Texas Bishops, members of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), have advocated for health care reform for decades. The Catholic approach to healthcare is shaped by the simple, but fundamental, principle that every person has a right to adequate healthcare and that health care is more than a commodity; it is a basic human right, an essential safeguard of human life and dignity.

The Texas Catholic Conference is the association of the 15 Roman Catholic dioceses of Texas. The Conference participates in public policy on behalf of the Bishops of Texas regarding institutional concerns of the Catholic Church as well as issues related to Catholic moral and social teachings. For more information on the Texas Catholic Conference, visit www.TXCatholic.org.

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