



December 7, 2004

Pastoral Statement of the Catholic Bishops of Texas on Access to Health Care

Catholic Bishops of Texas
call legislators' attention to health care crisis

AUSTIN — The Catholic Bishops of the 15 dioceses of Texas have issued a joint pastoral statement on access to health care, especially for the uninsured and underinsured people in Texas, and are asking legislators to address what the Bishops call “a worsening crisis.”

Figures released in August 2004 by the U. S. Census Bureau show that nationwide, the number of people without health insurance increased by 1.4 million, to 45 million in 2003. Texas leads the country in the number and percentage of people without health insurance, with more than 5 million people lacking health insurance and access to adequate healthcare services.

“As preparations are made for the upcoming legislative session, the Bishops are calling upon lawmakers to develop meaningful policies to relieve the lack of access to health care in Texas,” says Richard Daly, executive director of the Texas Catholic Conference, which issued the statement along with the Catholic Health Association of Texas. Specifically, the Bishops’ letter asks legislators: to restore the cuts made to the CHIP and Medicaid programs in the last session, to provide hospitals and health care providers with adequate reimbursements, to cover the costs of care, and to work together to craft a more sound and just health care system for Texas.

The Bishops are also calling upon Catholics and health care organizations to add their voices to the call for attention to the crisis. The Bishops are communicating with Catholics through their parishes and through the media.

“The Catholic Church has a rich tradition of caring for the poor and sick in Texas, and Catholic health facilities have led the way in providing care to all people, regardless of ability to pay. Still, our state’s health care crisis continues to worsen,” says Cynthia Colbert, president of the Catholic Health Association of Texas. “We need the advocacy and prayers of all Catholic faithful to work toward solutions.”

