



WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

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WCC SAYS STATE BUDGET MUST PROTECT HEALTH NEEDS OF POOR, MEDICAID

Arguing that a “culture of life” must include access to health care for needy persons, the public policy voice for Wisconsin’s Roman Catholic Bishops, urged a legislative Committee to sustain Wisconsin’s commitment to its Medicaid program.

“Wisconsin’s health care safety net has long served a critical role in securing the well-being of our most vulnerable citizens,” said Kathy Markeland, WCC Associate Director for Health Care and Respect Life in written [testimony](#) to the Assembly Committee on Medicaid Reform.

“As a basic human right, the justice of our health care delivery system should be evaluated primarily by the degree to which the poor and vulnerable are cared for. To truly build a ‘culture of life,’ the health care safety net must affirm that those at the margins have a claim on our care. The common good, that is the dignity of our whole human family, rests on the quality of our care for those in need.”

The WCC testimony emphasized that even in tight fiscal times, moral claims of needy people must remain a priority.

“In fact, it is at these times when our care for poor, elderly, and disabled individuals is even more critical,” she wrote.

“The cost of providing critical health care services to those in need may well be staggering,” she noted. “But in a nation where we are spending more than any other country in the world on health care while still failing to cover all of our citizens, it is simply wrong to take more away from the most vulnerable. Taking care and coverage away from those at the margins solves nothing.”

In her testimony, Markeland recounted Catholic contributions to the health care system in Wisconsin. She noted that, as a major health care provider, the Catholic health care system offers practical insight based on first hand experience. As an employer, the Church itself contends with the escalating costs of providing quality coverage for those who serve in a variety of ministries. Catholic social teaching also helps frame issues for debating health policy.

Markeland also recalled that the Bishops of the United States have affirmed “health care is more than a commodity; it is a basic human right, an essential safeguard of human life and dignity.”

Noting that Wisconsin's health care safety net compares favorably to that of many other states, the WCC said there is more that can and should be done. She cited the Governor's proposal to extend medical assistance eligibility to cover those aging out of the state's foster care system as a "laudable extension of the state's commitment to the future success of these young people who have been entrusted to our care."

Likewise, a budget proposal to extend prenatal care coverage to pregnant, undocumented immigrant women "embraces a view of human life that both recognizes the unborn child's claim on our care and concern from the moment of conception and establishes our commitment in an equal way to the care of the mother."

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