



HEALTHCARE FOR THE UNINSURED

The Issue

Although America is the most prosperous nation in the world, the number of Americans without health coverage is staggering—more than 44 million individuals or 16 percent of the under-65 population. Surprisingly, most of the uninsured are employed. According to a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation study, approximately 80 percent of the uninsured live in families headed by someone in the workforce. The uninsured are most likely to be low income, in poor or fair health and employed in small firms. Especially vulnerable are children in uninsured families.

In 1997, Congress enacted the landmark State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) and expanded Medicaid to provide health coverage for low-income uninsured children. More than \$40 billion in new federal funds were made available to states over a 10-year period.

The Medicare Modernization Act included Medicaid funding important to hospitals serving as a "safety net" to the uninsured. However, budget pressures already are placing that funding at risk. CHRISTUS Health supports full funding and strongly opposes federal budget cuts that would reverse important improvements in health care coverage.

The CHRISTUS Health Position: Health care for all.

CHRISTUS Health's ministry is committed to health coverage for all. This commitment is based on Catholic social justice teaching and a mission of service to the poor. For millions of vulnerable persons who do not have access to health insurance for them or their families, the current U.S. health care system lacks accessibility. CHRISTUS Health recognizes that the access to healthcare coverage for all will be a tremendous undertaking; however, the task must begin now.

With the support of CHRISTUS Health, Congress created a "Citizen's Healthcare Working Group" to initiate a national debate on improving the healthcare system and assuring all Americans access to quality, affordable health care coverage.

CHRISTUS Health is working in collaboration with the Catholic Health Association, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the American Hospital Association to further a national dialogue on the tragedy of the uninsured.

CHRISTUS Health supports the proposals made to the United States House of Representatives, Ways and Means Subcommittee on Health by the Catholic Health Association of the United States.

- Mandatory coverage for all children under the age of 19.
- Small employer premium subsidies for small employers to purchase insurance for workers who are 200 percent below the federal poverty level.
- Premium subsidies/Tax Credits for individuals for the purchase of non-group insures for people 300 percent below the federal poverty level or to help pay premiums for workers with an employee sponsored insurance program.

CHRISTUS Health continues to seek to raise public awareness of the injustice of the inadequacy of health care coverage, particularly with regard to the uninsured, and to help build support for changes especially for children and the working uninsured.

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