



HEALTH CARE

Briefing Paper Catholic Advocacy Day, 2009

Affordable and accessible health care is an essential safeguard of human life and a fundamental human right. With an estimated 47 million Americans lacking health care coverage, it is also an urgent national priority.

Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, USCCB 2007

Basic Health Plan (BHP): The Washington State Basic Health Plan, started in 1987, is a state- subsidized health insurance program providing sliding scale coverage for individuals and families with a gross family income up to 200% of the federal poverty level (FPL), and who are not eligible for Medicare or Medicaid. The BHP offers benefits, through managed care providers. The uninsured come primarily from working families with low and moderate incomes whose employers do not provide health care coverage. At its peak in 2001, BHP had capacity for 133,000 people. BHP currently covers fewer than 100,000 people.

The Governor's proposed budget decreases funding for the BHP by \$252 million, a 42% reduction. This would cut a significant number of people from the program. In addition beginning this month, February, 2009, the Governor directed the Health Care Authority to reduce its budget by \$15 million. One of the ways that this will be accomplished is by reducing the number of slots in the BHP. For every two members who leave the program, BHP will only enroll one new member.

ACTION: Please ask your Representatives and your Senator to maintain funding for the Basic Health Plan at current levels in order to insure that individuals and families have access to health insurance.

Apple Health for Kids: The successful "Cover All Kids" legislation, passed in 2007, and now called "Apple Health," provides subsidized health care coverage to children whose family's income is below 250% of the (FPL). The law requires all uninsured children to have access to health insurance by 2010.

The law extended coverage to include children whose family's income is below 300% of the FPL on January 1st of this year. However, to meet the budget deficit experienced by state government, Governor Gregoire did not fund this expansion in her proposed biennial budget. Since she released her budget, the Congress has passed and President Obama has signed the Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2009 (CHIP). The increase funding for our State will allow about 6,000 more children to access healthcare.

It is estimated that there are about 8,000 children living in families with household incomes between 250% and 300% of the FPL who are not covered by health insurance. Children without health coverage are generally less healthy because their parents are more likely to postpone needed health care. There is a significant need to fund an outreach program that will inform families about the opportunity to enroll their children in health insurance programs.

ACTION: Please ask your Representatives and your Senator to provide funding for healthcare coverage for all eligible children living below 300% of the federal poverty level, as well provide funding for an outreach program.