WSCC 2010 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

HEALTH CARE

PRINCIPLES

Health care is more than a commodity; it is a basic human right, an essential safeguard of human life and dignity. We believe our people's healthcare should not depend on where they work, how much their parents earn, or where they live. Our constant teaching that each human life must be protected and human dignity promoted leads us to insist that all people have a right to healthcare.

Framework for Comprehensive Healthcare Reform, USCCB, 1993

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

HEALTH CARE REFORM: As long-time advocates of health care reform, the U.S. Catholic bishops continue to make the moral case for genuine health care reform that: 1) respects human life and dignity; 2) provides affordable health care for all with a special concern for the poor; 3) pursues the common good and preserves pluralism, including freedom of conscience; and 4) restrains costs and applies them equitably across the spectrum of payers. To do this, the reform plan must reaffirm the essential, longstanding and widely supported policy against using federal funds for abortion, make health coverage affordable and ensure coverage for immigrants.

In Washington State, it is estimated that well over half a million people do not have health insurance, and these numbers are rising. Many working adults cannot afford to pay the rising cost of insuring themselves and their children. Washington State legislators are awaiting the action of Congress before instituting changes to our health care deliverance system.

APPLE HEALTH: The successful "Cover All Kids" legislation, re-named "Apple Health," requires all uninsured children to be covered by 2010. The goal of this law was to remove barriers that prevent eligible children from obtaining coverage. Outreach support was provided in 2009 to ensure that all eligible children and their families are able to access the program. The economic downturn threatens progress, as proposed cuts in children's health insurance would limit eligibility to families earning 250 percent or less of the federal poverty level. Those who earn up to 300 percent are eligible now. The change in eligibility would eliminate health insurance for thousands of children.

MENTAL HEALTH: There is growing awareness that barriers to mental health services exist in Washington State, particularly for veterans, children, the homeless, and for those involved in the criminal justice system. It is important to allow the mental health system the flexibility to ensure access for those in need of services.

RECOMMENDATIONS

WSCC SUPPORTS:

- Providing access to health care for all
- Maintaining the "Cover All Kids" law, including outreach and education
- Providing health care services for refugees and immigrants
- Improving access to mental health services