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RESPECT LIFE MINISTRY

July 29, 2009

An Open Letter from the Respect Life Office:

The Health Care Reform effort is at a crucial stage with an opportunity and challenge for people of faith to be involved in the discussion. This is an issue not only of “rights” but more importantly one of human dignity, and is such both for individuals and society at large. Being created in the image of God, who we confess to be a community of persons, we too are called to be more than individuals. An integral part of living up to the fullness of our dignity as individuals is precisely participating in others living up to theirs. One of the ways this can be facilitated in our country, is the urgently needed health care reform. But we need the reform to fully respect the life and dignity of every person. We need to move cautiously enough to not buy into a culture that too easily treats people as objects to be used and manipulated for profit, power, and/or pleasure (or the bottom line of a balance sheet) – and leaves the vulnerable at the margin, or worse.

It is important to have reform that genuinely provides access for all, with particular concern given to the poor and marginalized, while restraining and equitably applying costs. Freedom of conscience coupled with a variety of options respects both human dignity and our country’s tradition of choice of care. ***But most fundamental to any discussion of health care needs to be respect for human life itself.*** Neither beginning nor end of life issues can be viewed as peripheral issues to be left for sorting out later. In the rush toward reform, end of life issues are moving far too quickly, without adequate transparency and public discussion; and beginning of life issues are being dismissed as settled, without respect to the majority preference of restrictions on both abortion and its funding.

In the discussion of national health care reform, please make the effort to be fully informed and engaged, detached from partisan politics, and rooted in principles of Catholic social teaching. Encourage lawmakers to refine and restrain their efforts to genuinely address quality health care access and affordability, while respecting religious freedom of conscience and our national tradition of choice in care. Encourage them to trust the American people and have the honesty and courage to grapple with end of life issues of extraordinary care publicly, honoring the crucial participation of families and faith communities. Insist that they ***support a health care reform bill that respects life, excluding any mandated coverage for abortion, upholding laws that restrict abortion funding, and protecting conscience rights of all tax payers.***

For more information about Health Care Reform, quick access to sending an e-mail to your legislators, as well as contact information for the White House and other policy makers actively involved in Health Care Reform, please visit the Respect Life website at www.respectlife.catholicweb.com.

Thank you for your witness to the dignity of human life at all stages, from conception to natural death, and all stages in between! United together with you in prayer,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Laurie Edwards".

Laurie Edwards, Coordinator

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