



Franciscan Action Network

Transforming the World in the Spirit of St. Francis and St. Clare

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Health Care Reform Policy Statement

August 2009

Franciscan Action Network (FAN) is in full collaboration with Catholic Health Association (CHA) USA (www.chausa.org) and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) (<http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/national/health1.shtml>) in evaluating and responding to legislative efforts at comprehensive health care reform in the 111th Congress. Our advocacy for health care reform is further developed through collaboration with individual and institutional FAN members who are engaged in the ministry of health care.

It is our position that health care reform is necessary. Over 47 million people in the United States do not have access to health care. Costs have significantly increased while efficiency has diminished. People are losing their health care due to unemployment and change of jobs. The prospects of doing nothing are more costly than doing something to reform our national health care system.

FAN recognizes that the common good is well served to the degree that policy positively impacts those who struggle and are poor. As such, this is a fundamental consideration as we assess efforts at health care reform from a Franciscan perspective. Additionally, our Franciscan approach to health care reform is spiritually and theologically grounded in core experiences from our tradition: Francis' encounter with the leper, his care and ministry to the outcast, and Clare's healing affection.

We infer that a stewardship of health is based on two foundations: (1) **our Christian faith stance that life is precious** and (2) **a Franciscan appreciation for all creation.** Our faith stance also recognizes that we see life on earth as limited when compared to our total life with God. St. Francis welcomed "Sister Death" on God's time. This particularly impacts our approach to key issues associated with the beginning and end of life and their relationship to health care reform.

Embracing a consistent ethic of life, our advocacy strives to protect life from conception to natural death. We recognize and affirm that policies that promote dialogue and consultation for moral and responsible end of life decisions are consistent with the Catholic tradition. This practice, expressed, for example in the "living will," has given persons significant authority to determine medical procedures and end of life directives. We support the responsible use of this authority. There are presently no efforts to enforce end of life decisions upon persons in any version of health care reform legislation presently before Congress.

Offering expanded access to health care also encourages new mothers and mothers-to-be to obtain services needed to bring forth healthy children through pre-natal and infant care. This is an effort that FAN wholeheartedly supports.

We are especially watching policies associated with reform that are emerging in the area of reproductive services. By law public funding of abortion is prohibited (except in the case of grave health risks to the mother, rape and incest). This law is called the Hyde Amendment. It is connected to the appropriation process and must be enacted every year. There are presently no efforts to mandate abortion beyond the provisions of the Hyde Amendment in any version of health care reform legislation presently in Congress. In conjunction with the CHA and USCCB, FAN opposes policies that would favor abortion on demand and will work to exclude such policies from comprehensive health care reform legislation.



Image from Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity – www.fhcm.org

