



MICHIGAN
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

THE MICHIGAN
HEALTH MINISTRIES OF
ASCENSION
HEALTH

OSF
ST. FRANCIS HOSPITAL
& MEDICAL GROUP

TRINITY HEALTH
Livonia, Michigan

STATEMENT OF GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR MEDICAID REFORM

May 14, 2013

We, the undersigned, speaking on behalf of the Catholic bishops in Michigan and the largest network of health care providers in the state, respectfully offer our guiding principles for policies that seek to reform the state's Medicaid program. The specific provision of the federal policy to fund the state's effort presents a welcome opportunity for policymakers to extend access and to strengthen protection for those who lack care.

For decades the Catholic Church has consistently insisted that access to decent health care is a basic safeguard of human life and an affirmation of human dignity from conception until natural death. As the Michigan Legislature begins debate on Medicaid reform, we believe that any proposal must be crafted in a manner that:

- Is truly universal,
- Does not deny care to those in need, and
- Respects the life and conscience of every person

These goals can be accomplished through the present, unique opportunity to reform a Medicaid program that, at its core, is designed to protect the vulnerable.

As leaders of our respective institutions, individually guided by the directive to uphold and protect the sanctity and dignity of human life, we believe reforming Medicaid - in a manner that is acceptable - follows a moral track that will lead to sound public policy and an increased standard of living in our state. Reforming the "path to access" for those who are currently excluded from health care is a noble endeavor by which future generations of Michigan workers, families and children stand to benefit.

Medicaid reform offers an effective solution by reducing costly emergency room trips while increasing primary care visits. Reform will also have a significant impact on reducing the number of uninsured persons in the state. Extending health care access to approximately 450,000 adults, thereby decreasing the number of uninsured by 46 percent, is a rare chance to improve substantially the health and lives of Michigan residents. We support this socially just goal and the impact legislation could have on strengthening the structural framework of the state budget.

Reforming Medicaid will also provide an economic stimulus to the state, in addition to the moral certainty of providing greater health care access to vulnerable persons. Since the federal government will cover expenses for which Michigan pays today, the state's General Fund is expected to save \$206 million in 2014 alone. According to estimates, Michigan will realize a savings of \$320 million in uncompensated care costs by 2022. Additionally, over \$20 billion in new federal dollars received between 2014 and 2023 will generate millions of new dollars in the state's economy.

For the reasons identified above, we believe Michigan will better position itself for the future by accepting federal funds to reform the state's Medicaid program. As leaders of Michigan's largest religious community and network of health care providers, we proudly offer our support to the chorus of voices urging the Michigan Legislature to pass genuine Medicaid reform.



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