

DIOCESE OF MANCHESTER
Secretariat for Administration

February 25, 2014

The Honorable Chuck Morse, President
New Hampshire Senate
State House, Room 302
107 North Main Street
Concord, New Hampshire 03301

Re: SB 413 (Relative to Access to Health Insurance Coverage)

Dear Senator Morse:

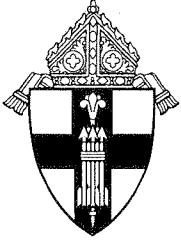
As the Director of the Office of Public Policy of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Manchester, and on behalf of Bishop Peter Libasci, I write to express our support for SB 413.

The Roman Catholic Church in New Hampshire in theory supports legislation to expand Medicaid to provide health insurance to low-income adults at or below 138% of the federal poverty level. This legislation potentially impacts 50,000 low-income New Hampshire residents who otherwise would not have health insurance coverage. The federal government will bear 100% of the cost of the program, which would be repealed if the federal contribution toward the cost of the program drops below 100%. With a special concern for the poor and vulnerable, we support efforts to increase access to health care that protects human life at all stages.

For decades, the Bishops of the United States consistently have advocated for universal access to health care. In a 1993 resolution on health care reform, the United States Bishops stated:

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 health care should not depend on where they work, how much their parents earn or where they live.

Our belief in achieving affordable and accessible health care coverage for all stems from the fundamental right to life and the dignity of the human person. Unfortunately, so many low-income families are left with the impossible choice of either paying for necessary medication and medical treatment or paying for food for the family. Too many of the poor, vulnerable, disabled, and legal immigrants cannot afford insurance premiums without foregoing other basic human needs, like food, shelter, and clothing. As a civil society, we need to ensure that no one is left without the ability to obtain needed medication or medical treatment or obtain emergency care when health is at risk.



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However, while we support expansion of Medicaid to cover more individuals, we wish to make it clear that we do not support expanded coverage of “objectionable services,” such as contraception, sterilization, and abortion. We support life-affirming healthcare, healthcare that supports and sustains life.

Although expansion of Medicaid is an important step to helping New Hampshire residents, we urge the Legislature to view this as an interim step and to seek opportunities to address the issue of poverty in our state in a truly comprehensive way, acting decisively toward helping the many in need in New Hampshire. In the words of our Holy Father Pope Francis, “poverty in the world is a scandal.” We are grateful that the New Hampshire Legislature has invested significant effort examining potential solutions to make health care coverage available to more of the working poor, and look forward to working with the Legislature to find ways to address the root causes of poverty in our state. Thank you for your consideration of our position and for your service to the people of New Hampshire.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Meredith Cook".

Meredith P. Cook, Esq.
Director, Office of Public Policy

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