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Two dozen Nebraska religious leaders support new health care abortion language

Thomas C. Fox | Dec. 18, 2009 NCR Today

A group of over two dozen clergy and faith leaders have come together as signatories on a letter to Senator Nelson, asking him to support Senator Casey?s proposed alternative language on abortion to the Senate health care bill. Many faith leaders in Nebraska have been passionately working to make sure health care reform happens as they feel it is a moral imperative to have affordable accessible health care for our communities. The text of the letter follows:

Dear Senator Nelson,

We are Nebraskan religious leaders, guided by the core of our faith traditions that teach the principles of justice, human dignity, and the common good. We appeal to you today to support the compromise on abortion coverage and funding, proposed in the manager?s amendment to the Senate bill. We believe such a compromise is necessary to avoid an impasse that could threaten the future of one of our nation's most important legislative and moral priorities.

As Nebraskan religious leaders, we support this compromise. We support its strong conscience protections, like those contained in the current House bill; removal of the "assured availability" provision that requires one plan that covers abortion and one plan that does not; provisions requiring that insurance companies in the health care exchange segregate funds and allow individuals to opt out of abortion coverage in any plan that may cover it to ensure that no federal funds pay for abortions or subsidize plans that include abortion coverage; and finally, we strongly support funding for programs that support pregnant women, adoption, children's health, and pre-natal care.

Given the complicated set of concerns surrounding abortion funding and coverage in health care reform, the compromise that is offered in the manager?s amendment to the Senate bill is the best way forward. This amendment will extend health care to all and strengthen our ability to gather religious support for those members who take tough votes in favor of reform, even in the face of opposition from both sides of the debate.

Thank you again for all your efforts. Our prayers are with you as you move our nation forward with the important business of health care reform.

Sincerely,

Fr. Bert Thelen, S. J. Fr. Chuck Lintz
St. John Catholic Church, Omaha St. Columbans Nebraska

Fr. Neal Wilkinson, S. J. Rev. Damon Laaker
St. Therese of the Child Jesus Grace Lutheran Church

Sr. Kathleen, RSM Fr. Al Utzig
Sisters of Mercy Holy Cross Catholic Church

Dr. Roger Bergman Rev. McCullough
Creighton Peace and Justice Depart St. John African Methodist Episcopal

Fr. Jack McCaslin Rev. Brian Maas
Omaha Archdiocese First Lutheran Church of Lincoln

Rev. Chuck Bentjen Rev. Richard Skyler Johnson
Justice and Advocacy Ministries St. Paul Lutheran Church, ELCA

Rev. Jane Florence Rev. Timothy J. Wiggins, ELCA
First United Methodist Church of Omaha

Rev. Dr. Kenneth W. Moore Ssters of Mercy West Mid-West
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Leadership Team and Justice Team

Rev. Melody Brindel Rev. Roddy Dunkerson
American Lutheran Church, ELCA Nebraska Conference, United Church of Christ

Paul Olson, Ph.D., Chair Rev. Lowell Hennigs
Justice and Strategic Action Committee Our Saviour?s Lutheran Church, ELCA
Interchurch Ministries of Nebraska

Rabbi Aryeh Azriel Pastor Janet Goodman-Banks
Congregation Temple Israel Reach Out Christian Center

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