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## Pastor's Column

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### USCCB Update on Health Care Legislation

*The following statement is a response by the Catholic Bishops of the United States in regard to the health care legislation that was recently passed in the House of Representatives.*

WASHINGTON—After the U.S. House of Representatives passed the American Health Care Act (H.R. 1628), Bishop Frank J. Dewane of Venice, Florida, Chairman of the U.S. Bishops' Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development, called on the Senate to strip out the harmful provisions of the bill when the chamber takes it up for consideration.

“Even with efforts to improve the bill before passage, the American Health Care Act still contains major defects, particularly regarding changes to Medicaid that risk coverage and affordability for millions; it is deeply disappointing that the voices of those who will be most severely impacted were not heeded,” said Bishop Dewane. “The AHCA does offer critical life protections, and our health care system desperately needs these safeguards. But still, vulnerable people must not be left in poor and worsening circumstances as Congress attempts to fix the current and impending problems with the Affordable Care Act.”

Since discussions about repealing the Affordable Care Act began, the U.S. Bishops have repeatedly called for Congress to honor key moral principles in health care reform. Among them are: access for all people to comprehensive, quality health care that is truly affordable, including extra consideration for pre-existing conditions; respect for life by preventing the use of federal funds for abortion or to purchase health care plans that cover it; and conscience protections. Prior to Thursday's vote, Bishop Dewane urged House members to insist on changes, especially for the sake of those who are struggling.

“When the Senate takes up the AHCA, it must act decisively to remove the harmful proposals from the bill that will affect low-income people—including immigrants—as well as add vital conscience protections, or begin reform efforts anew. Our health care policy must honor all human life and dignity from conception to natural death, as well as defend the sincerely-held moral and religious beliefs of those who have any role in the health care system,” said Bishop Dewane. —May 4, 2017

*Fr. Mike*