



# News Release

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## **MCC Supports Medicaid Reform Bill**

March 25, 2013 JEFFERSON CITY, MO – The Missouri Catholic Conference (MCC) went on record Monday in support of a Medicaid reform bill sponsored by State Representative Jay Barnes (R - Jefferson City).

Msgr. Greg Higley, Vicar General for the Diocese of Jefferson City, testified on behalf of the MCC.

He noted that the bill included strong pro-life protections, encouraged people to take responsibility for their own healthcare and expanded health coverage to some of Missouri's poorest citizens.

"This bill prohibits funding of abortions, except to save the life of a mother," he said. "The bill also ensures Medicaid coverage for pregnant women and their unborn children."

Msgr. Higley said the bill affirmed two basic principles of Catholic teaching – subsidiarity and solidarity.

The bill upholds the principle of subsidiarity, said Msgr. Higley, because it asks people to be active participants in their own healthcare. HB 700 requires people to obtain health coverage through their employer or through the newly created insurance exchanges, if they can afford it.

The bill also includes incentives to encourage people to not use emergency rooms for illnesses that are best addressed by their family physicians.

In regards to the principle of solidarity, Msgr. Higley observed that the bill extended help to "the least among us."

At present, a mother with two children is normally not eligible for Medicaid health coverage if her annual income exceeds \$4,584. HB 700 raises the eligibility level to the federal poverty line or \$19,530 annually for that mother with two children.

Msgr. Higley observed that over the next several years, hospitals, including Catholic hospitals, will see major cuts in the federal funds they received for providing uncompensated care to the indigent.

Kerry Noble, CEO of Pemiscott Memorial Health Systems echoed Msgr. Higley's comments. "We are already operating off of the backs of our employees, they are taking the hard hits with reduced pay, reduced hours and more," he said. "Something must be done. If this hospital closes, as the largest employer in the poorest county

in the state, it will be horrible for the area, not to mention for the healthcare of those living there.”

Congress cut funds to hospitals under the assumption that Medicaid payments from patients would take up the slack. But if Missouri refuses to expand Medicaid, then those federal Medicaid dollars will not be available and some hospitals could close.

Several business organizations, including the Chamber of Commerce and Associated Industry, also went on record in support of HB 700.

The general assembly is considering various Medicaid bills as the federal government offers to provide significant additional funds to expand health coverage to individuals and families living below the federal poverty level.