

# Good News



Bringing the light of Christ to Missouri.

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“In our age, having health insurance is essential in order to access adequate healthcare, but many of those who are poor cannot afford it. In these instances, society has a moral obligation to find ways to assist these individuals and families in procuring health insurance.”

MCC Statement to members of the Missouri General Assembly February 13, 2013

## Medicaid With A Difference

*With Medicaid Expansion Bills Defeated, A Catholic Legislator Proposes A New Approach For Missouri*

Several bills to expand Medicaid have been defeated in the general assembly this year. But State Representative Jay Barnes (R-Jefferson City), a young Catholic attorney, is proposing a different kind of Medicaid bill that reforms the program and may have a better chance of approval.

HB 700 is Medicaid with a difference: it proposes a fundamental reform that recognizes both the rights and duties of individuals regarding their healthcare, while insisting that healthcare promote life and not abortion or other life threatening practices.

### Pro-Life Provisions

HB 700 explicitly prohibits funding of abortions, except to save the life of the mother. The bill also ensures continued robust Medicaid health coverage for pregnant women and their unborn children.

In addition, HB 700 establishes a new program – the Show-Me Healthy Babies Program – that will offer health coverage when the traditional Medicaid program doesn’t. The Show-Me Healthy Babies Program will make sure quality prenatal care is available to women who are uninsured.

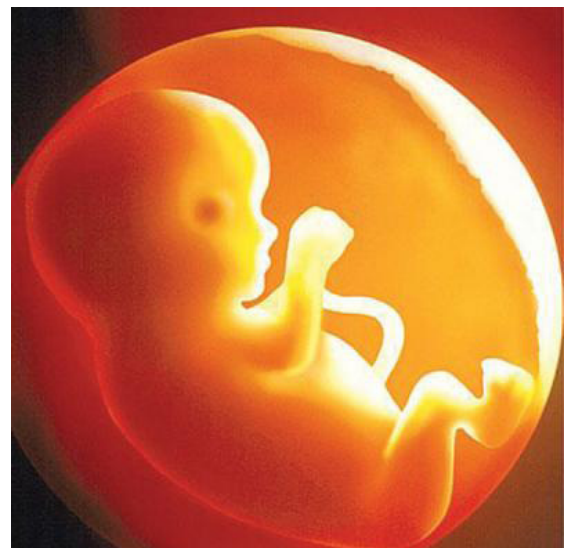
Prenatal care ensures healthy outcomes for both mother and child. By getting into family doctors or obstetricians/gynecolo-

gists early in their pregnancy, women learn more about the healthy lifestyle (good nutrition, no drinking alcohol or smoking) that can lead to the delivery of a healthier baby. Also, prenatal care visits can lead to the discovery of conditions that can be treated by early intervention.

### Two Catholic Principles

Catholic teaching affirms two basic principles that are embodied in the provisions of HB 700. The first principle is **subsidiarity** – the idea that things that can be done on a more personal, family or local level should be done on that level. The second principle calls for **solidarity** with the least among us and for assistance to the poor and marginalized when they cannot help themselves.

In regards to the principle of **subsidiar-**



# Continued: Medicaid With A Difference

ity, HB 700 asks people to become active participants in their own healthcare. No government program, including Medicaid, can be effective if people themselves refuse to take some responsibility for their own healthcare.

Toward that end, HB 700 asks people to obtain health coverage through their employer or through an insurance exchange if they can afford it. Premium subsidies are offered for this purpose. There are incentives to encourage people to access health services prudently rather than using emergency rooms for minor illnesses that are best addressed by a family doctor.

Regarding the principle of **solidarity**, HB 700 ensures health coverage is made available to some of our poorest citizens. At present, in most circumstances, a mother with two children is 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.

What will this mean? This will allow many working moms for the first time to qualify for health coverage. At the present time, many of these moms work two or more jobs and their employer either does not offer a health plan for them or they can-

not afford it. HB 700, therefore, will reward work and uphold the dignity of all working people.

## Addressing Threats to Hospitals

Most of the public is unaware of the financial crisis facing Missouri's smaller hospitals. Over the next several years, hospitals, including Catholic hospitals, will see major cuts in the federal funds they receive for providing uncompensated care to the indigent and uninsured.

Congress cut these funds under the assumption the expanded Medicaid would take up the slack; that is, more patients would be entering the hospital with Medicaid health coverage. But if Missouri refuses to expand Medicaid those federal Medicaid dollars will not be available to reimburse hospitals.

## The Legislative Landscape

As this *Good News* goes to print, no one knows whether any Medicaid bill will pass, but HB 700 is getting a close look by many legislators. A challenge will be for lawmakers to distinguish between HB 700, which reforms Medicaid, and other bills which merely expand the program. HB 700 is Medicaid with a difference but many legislators may not know that yet.

The Missouri Catholic Conference strongly supports HB 700 and is urging Catholics to contact their state legislators at this time. If you need help identifying your state legislator, visit the Missouri Catholic Conference at [www.mocatholic.org](http://www.mocatholic.org) or call us at 1-800-456-1679.



St. Mary's Health Center in Jefferson City

## HB 700 Messages

What do I tell my legislators? Here are some short messages you can convey:

- Please support HB 700 – it is Medicaid with a difference;
- HB 700 includes pro-life protections. It prohibits funding of abortions;
- HB 700 establishes the Show-Me Healthy Babies Program; all uninsured women should have access to prenatal care;
- Prenatal care promotes healthier outcomes for both mother and child; it encourages pregnant women to follow good health practices, such as good nutrition, no smoking and no drinking of alcohol;
- Prenatal care can also lead to the detection of medical conditions that can be addressed through early intervention. HB 700 can therefore save the lives of unborn children;
- HB 700 will offer health coverage to many working Missourians who are currently uninsured; this rewards work and upholds the dignity of all workers;
- HB 700 will help many smaller hospitals to stay open and serve their local communities;
- Don't let politics stop you from doing the right thing for Missouri!



# Where Have You Gone, Hippocrates?

The Hippocratic Oath, taken by those practicing the “art” of medicine, first appeared around the 4th Century B.C. When taking this oath in its original form, the medical practitioner promised to heal and protect his patients, keeping “them from harm and injustice.” The physician of antiquity also swore not to “give to a woman an abortive remedy,” or to “give a deadly drug to anybody who asked for it.”

Sadly, the Hippocratic Oath recited by medical school graduates today (if they take an oath at all) does not require one to swear not to perform abortion or euthanasia, but states rather that: “Most especially must I tread with care on matters of life and death,” and “Above all, I must not play at God.”

While the Hippocratic Oath may not be what it once was, medical practitioners still practice with a sense of morality, and most conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the Hippocratic adage “first, do no harm.” Through the years, American lawmakers have also understood that no healthcare provider should be forced to act against his or her conscience.

When the Supreme Court issued the *Roe v. Wade* decision in 1973, for example, federal lawmakers quickly

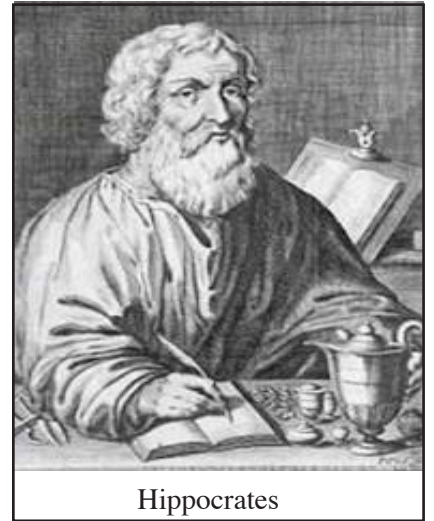
responded by passing the Church Amendment, which states that no individual or healthcare institution can be required to perform abortions or sterilization procedures, or make their facilities available for those purposes, if doing so violates their religious or moral convictions.

In 2004, federal lawmakers passed the Weldon Amendment, which prohibits state and local governments receiving federal healthcare funds from subjecting any institution or individual healthcare provider to discrimination for refusing to provide or refer for abortions. Both the Church and Weldon amendments have had bi-partisan support over the years, and have stood the test of time.

With the promulgation of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services contraceptive mandate, however, the issue of conscience protection has re-emerged as a matter in need of legislative attention.

On March 4, 2013 U.S. Congresswoman Diane Black (R-Tennessee), along with 66 co-sponsors, filed a bill in Washington (H.R. 940) referred to as the “Health Care Conscience Rights Act.” This bill would protect the right of individuals and health insurance providers to purchase and to provide health plans that do not include coverage for abortion, or other items to which the individual or health insurance provider has a religious or moral objection. The bill would also codify the Church and Weldon amendments, and would allow those aggrieved by violations of these provisions to sue for damages.

In Missouri, bills are presently pending in both the Missouri House and Missouri Senate that would protect



Hippocrates

the rights of conscience of Missouri healthcare providers. HB 457, sponsored by House Speaker Tim Jones (R-Eureka), and SB 84, sponsored by Senator Scott Rupp (R-O’Fallon), would protect the rights of healthcare providers who decline to participate in abortion, contraception, sterilization, embryonic stem cell research, assisted reproduction and human cloning.

Both the bill pending in Washington and those pending in Missouri face strong opposition from those who object to healthcare providers being able to “refuse treatment” to those in need of “reproductive services.”

We 21st Century Americans pride ourselves on being enlightened, freethinking, and progressive. Hippocrates and other ancient philosophers, however, would likely find the Western practice of physician-assisted suicide and state-sanctioned abortion barbaric. Perhaps we could learn something from those who have gone before us, even if they lived many centuries ago. At the very least, we can encourage our legislators in Washington and Missouri to protect the rights of conscience of our healthcare providers. Hippocrates, it seems, would have done nothing less.



Missouri Catholic  
Conference  
PO BOX 1022  
Jefferson City, MO  
65102-1022

RETURN SERVICE  
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Phone: (573) 635-7239  
Fax: (573) 635-7431



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## Pope Francis – From His Inauguration Homily, March 19, 2013

“Let us never forget that authentic power is service, and that the Pope too, when exercising power, must enter ever more fully into that service which has its radiant culmination on the Cross. He must be inspired by the lowly, concrete and faithful service which marked Saint Joseph and, like him, he must open his arms to protect all of God’s people and embrace with tender affection the whole of humanity, especially the poorest, the weakest, the least important, those whom Matthew lists in the final judgment on love: the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick and those in prison (cf. Matthew 25:31-46). Only those who serve with love are able to protect!”



Pope Francis waves to the crowd in St. Peter’s Square shortly after it was announced that he was the new pope.