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MCC Washington Office Statement on the Passage of Health Care Reform Legislation

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For over a year now, members of Congress and their staff and advocates all across the country have worked tirelessly for the passage of meaningful health care reform. The bill signed into law on March 23 is not perfect. But it acknowledges that we have serious problems in our health care system and takes important steps to improve access to care for the most vulnerable in our society.

By current estimates, over 50 million Americans lack health insurance and almost 45,000 people die each year as a result. A full 60 percent of bankruptcies are due to medical bills. Small business owners struggle to cover their employees. People with preexisting illnesses are often unable to purchase insurance. Those with insurance face rising premiums and deductibles and the risk of being dropped when they get sick. Life is hard enough for those who are sick. Rather than piling on the stress of medical bills and endless paperwork, we should be doing everything we can to help ease their burden.

The current situation is unacceptable in a world where every wealthy nation – and many not-so-wealthy nations – have figured out how to provide at least basic health care services to all of their citizens.

In 2007, Mennonite Church USA adopted a set of principles on health care reform which called for, among other things: eliminating financial and health status barriers to health care access; strengthening public health systems such as Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program; and a greater sharing of risks, costs, and responsibility by all. Representatives from the Mennonite Central Committee Washington Office, as well as representatives from several other Anabaptist agencies involved in health care, worked together on the development of these principles. The bill signed into law on March 23, along with the subsequent package of "fixes" passed on March 25, generally supports these goals.

Jesus came that we may have life, and have it abundantly (John 10:10b). As such, we should be willing to share of our abundance to help others meet their needs. During his ministry on Earth, Jesus demonstrated his compassion for the suffering again and again. He showed his concern for our brokenness, inside and out. He understood that broken bodies keep people from living abundant lives.

Passage of this legislation marks the beginning, rather than the end, of health care reform. Now begins the difficult task of education and implementation. At the MCC Washington Office, we will be working with other faith-based organizations to help patients, providers and small business owners understand their rights and responsibilities under the new law. And we will continue to advocate for administrative and legislative changes to ensure that health care reform benefits the most vulnerable in our society.

For more information on health care reform, visit washington.mcc.org/life/health

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