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Bishops on health care reform

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The U.S. bishops waded into the debate over health care reform with a letter to congressional leaders pointing the four criteria that governs the bishops' thinking on health care and giving special attention to two of these points.

The four governing criteria are: respect for human life and dignity, access for all, pluralism and equitable costs. The two that need special attention, according to the letter signed by Bishop William F. Murphy of Rockville Centre, N.Y., are: respect for human life and access.

Murphy is chairman of the bishops' committee on domestic justice and human development.

"No health care reform plan should compel us or others to pay for the destruction of human life, whether through government funding or mandatory coverage of abortion. Any such action would be morally wrong," Murphy wrote. He said that no federal funding of abortions is a long-established consensus among voters, and "health care reform cannot be a vehicle for abandoning this consensus."

On access for all, Murphy wrote, "All people need and should have access to comprehensive, quality health care that they can afford, and it should not depend on their stage of life, where or whether they or their parents work, how much they earn, where they live, or where they were born. *The Bishops' Conference believes health care reform should be truly universal and it should be genuinely affordable.*" (Emphasis is Murphy's.)

The full text of Murphy's letter is on the bishops' web site: www.usccb.org/sdwp/national/2009-07-17-murphy-letter-congress.pdf

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