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**‘ABORTION COMPROMISE’ DOES NOT ADDRESS CORE PROBLEM IN SENATE HEALTH BILL, SAYS CARDINAL DINARDO, BISHOPS’ PRO-LIFE CHAIR**

**‘Compromise’ would make citizens pay for others’ abortions  
Senate should mirror House of Representative’s Hyde amendment language  
Bill doesn’t meet goals of affordability, fairness to legal immigrants, protection of life**

WASHINGTON—Responding to reports of a new “compromise” proposal on abortion in the U.S. Senate’s health care reform bill, Cardinal Daniel DiNardo today reaffirmed the position of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops that the legislation will be morally unacceptable “unless and until” it complies with longstanding current laws on abortion funding such as the Hyde amendment. Cardinal DiNardo is Archbishop of Galveston-Houston and Chairman of the Conference’s Committee on Pro-Life Activities.

The Cardinal commented on efforts by Senator Robert Casey (D-PA) to improve the Senate bill’s treatment of abortion.

“Senator Casey’s good-faith effort to allow individuals to ‘opt out’ of abortion coverage actually underscores how radically the underlying Senate bill would change abortion policy. Excluding elective abortions from overall health plans is not a privilege that individuals should have to seek as the exception to the norm. In all other federal health programs, excluding abortion coverage *is* the norm. And numerous opinion polls show that the great majority of Americans do not want abortion coverage.”

“I welcome Senator Casey’s good-faith effort to improve this bill, said Cardinal Dinardo.” In particular he has sought to improve protection for conscience rights, and to include

programs of support for pregnant women and adoptive parents that we favor in their own right. However, these improvements do not change the fundamental problem with the Senate bill: Despite repeated claims to the contrary, it does not comply with longstanding Hyde restrictions on federal funding of elective abortions and health plans that include them.”

Cardinal DiNardo had written to the Senate on December 14, saying that “the Catholic bishops of the United States strongly support authentic reform of our ailing health care system.” His letter cited “three moral criteria for reform: respect for life and conscience; affordability for the poor; and access to much-needed basic health care for immigrants,” noting that so far the Senate bill “has fallen short of the example set by the House version of this legislation in each of these areas.”

On abortion funding, the Cardinal urged the Senate to “incorporate into this bill the longstanding and widely supported policies of current law, acknowledged and reaffirmed by the Senate itself” when it approved the Consolidated Appropriations Act for the new fiscal year on December 13. This Act reaffirmed the Hyde amendment and other laws that exclude elective abortions from health plans receiving federal funds -- including the plans that cover the Senators themselves and all other federal employees. The Senate so far has failed to reflect this same policy in its health care bill as the House has done, he said [see [www.usccb.org/healthcare/DiNardo\\_1214\\_letter.pdf](http://www.usccb.org/healthcare/DiNardo_1214_letter.pdf)].

Cardinal DiNardo said December 18: “We continue to oppose and urge others to oppose the Senate bill unless and until this fundamental failure is remedied. And whatever the immediate outcome in the Senate, we will continue to work for health care reform which truly protects the life, dignity, conscience and health of all. As the bishops have said many times, ‘providing affordable and accessible health care that clearly reflects these fundamental principles is a public good, moral imperative and urgent national priority.’ In particular we will work vigorously to ensure that the substance of the House’s provision on abortion funding is included in final legislation. A special debt of gratitude is owed to House and Senate members, especially Rep. Bart Stupak (D-MI) and Sen. Ben Nelson (D-NE), who have placed their votes and reputation on the line to stand up for unborn children. Making this legislation consistent with longstanding federal law on abortion will not threaten needed authentic reform, but will help ensure its passage.”

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