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January 31, 2020

Dear Priests and Deacons,

In October of 2019, I joined my brother Catholic bishops of Missouri in issuing a [statement of support for the expansion of MO HealthNet](#), the Medicaid program in our state. The initiative, which will appear on the ballot this fall for placement in the Missouri Constitution, will expand affordable healthcare coverage for the most vulnerable among us.

Recently, questions, concerns and speculation have surfaced regarding an argument that the federal pro-life protections in Medicaid—secured through the Hyde Amendment more than 40 years ago—would be terminated, putting government funds at risk for allocation to abortions.

We acknowledge this concern, however, with abiding trust in our Lord Jesus Christ, we cannot operate out of fear and speculation of the unknown. Our commitment to life is unwavering and lives are at stake. We must make decisions based on what we currently know to be true:

- With greater access to health insurance through Medicaid, we are saving lives and ensuring better health outcomes for our families in need.
- The risk for elimination of the Hyde Amendment is unlikely, based on its 40-plus-year history and polls showing that the majority of Americans oppose public funding of abortion.
- In the unlikely event that the Hyde Amendment is repealed, pro-life states like Missouri would pursue every legal avenue to prevent public funding for abortion through the state Medicaid programs.
- Medicaid reimbursements are vital to the healthcare delivery system, ensuring continued care to the most needy, including care provided by our Catholic hospitals.
- Many of our Catholic hospitals provide services that are left unpaid, putting the future of those institutions at risk.

The Missouri bishops' support for this initiative is consistent with our commitment to life. I encourage you all to read more on the [Missouri Catholic Conference](#) website and in the [St. Louis Review](#).

Please consider our responsibility as Catholics to advocate for decisions that will uphold the dignity of every human person. Our families depend on decent housing and health care to flourish.

Let us pray to God the Father to continue to guide us in our careful advocacy around legislative issues that affect the lives of so many of our brothers and sisters. Lord, amid the fear, speculation and uncertainty that surround us, help us to trust in your perfect plan for what tomorrow will bring.

God bless you all.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Robert J. Carlson
Archbishop of St. Louis