



# Faithful Reform in Health Care

ELEVATING THE FAITH COMMUNITY'S MORAL AND PROPHETIC VOICE  
IN SUPPORT OF AFFORDABLE QUALITY HEALTH CARE FOR ALL

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September 22, 2007

**A Letter to Members of the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives  
from State, Regional and Local Faith Leadership  
Regarding the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP)**

To Members of the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives:

The United States – the richest nation in the world – is home to over nine million children who do not have access to needed health care. For those affected, this is a personal and medical crisis; for others it is an economic or political crisis. But because we have the capacity to solve the problem and won't, for all of us it is a moral crisis. How much longer can we live with ourselves knowing that our children are living sicker and dying younger simply because they cannot get the health care they need?

As leaders of faith communities in our states, we believe that all of us have been created in the image of God, and in each new act of creation, we are given the sacred obligation to care for one another. Such care includes tending to the health of our neighbors. In light of that obligation, the faith communities in which we serve are committed to issues integral to health and health care.

It will take all of us – individuals, families, communities, states and the federal government – working together and sharing responsibility for our children's health care needs. With the pending reauthorization of the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), we are writing to ask you to accept responsibility for the role the federal government must take. We thank you for taking the first steps toward reauthorizing and expanding SCHIP. Knowing that the process has been tumultuous, your perseverance in doing the right thing for our children is commendable. But we know the job is not finished until the two houses of Congress have reconciled the differences in the two bills, reauthorized SCHIP and funded it at the level needed to move toward getting ALL of our children the health care they need.

Toward that end, we are requesting three things:

1. **We urge you to reauthorize and expand SCHIP** before it expires on September 30, to protect those children who already are in the program and to provide

services to others who are long overdue in getting the health care they need. When polls show that 84% of us support the reauthorization and expansion of SCHIP, we know that there is strong bi-partisan support for this program across the country. Further, we know that this support mirrors the opinions of the people who sit in our pews – Republicans, Democrats, and Independents – people of faith who believe that our children should be regarded as sacred gifts entrusted to our care, not as pawns in a game of partisan politics. We ask you to look beyond political ideology; to consider the teachings of your own faith tradition; to reclaim what you have believed about humans being created in the image of God; and to discern the best course of action based on those understandings.

2. **We urge you to push for the strongest possible conference bill** – a bill that closely resembles the SCHIP provisions in the House bill which is designed to cover more children and provide more of the services they need. We believe that ALL children should be afforded needed health care, and that comprehensive services are a part of that equation. As people of faith, we are reminded that the wholeness of our mind, body and spirit contribute to the overall well-being which God intends for us. Providing needed health care for our children confirms our role as partners in fulfilling Gods promises for them. At this moment we have the opportunity to set our sights on giving this generation of children the healthy start they need to move toward becoming healthy productive members of our society.
3. **We urge you to reject any new interpretations of current SCHIP regulations**, such as those recently mandated by the administration, that limit the states' flexibility to meet the needs of its children and their families. We know our colleagues in the states are on the front lines in addressing many human needs, including the health care services now up for debate. We do not see the feared movement from private to public insurance. We do not see our congregants wasting precious family resources so that they are not able to afford health insurance. We do not see people taking advantage of a free system. Instead, we see families struggling to make ends meet even at 300% of the poverty level as employers cut health care benefits, as out-of-pocket expenses lead to bankruptcy, and as pre-existing medical conditions make getting any kind of insurance impossible. As 50 people die prematurely every day because they cannot get needed health care (an average of one person per state per day!), we urge you to guarantee flexibility and encourage creativity as our state leaders address the needs unique to their needs.

What is at stake is not the money we may spend, but the moral compass of our country. It's a matter of how we choose to spend our abundant resources. It's a matter of deciding what we value as a nation. We urge you to make our children a national priority, and to reauthorize SCHIP with sufficient funding to cover as many children as possible. Until we as a nation agree that everyone should have needed health care, it is imperative that we at least get our children covered. It's very simply the right and moral thing to do.

As you deliberate in the coming days, we certainly will be in prayer for the children of our country, that they may be spared the pain and suffering that accompanies the lack of

needed health care. We also will be praying for you, our elected leaders, that your deliberations and decisions might transcend partisan politics and reflect the moral vision of a nation that truly values all of our children.

Respectfully signed by leaders of faith communities in the states:

**Arkansas**

Jeanne Koons, Church Women United, Hot Springs Village

**California**

Rick Schlosser, California Church IMPACT, Sacramento

Rev. Walt Parry, Fresno Metro Ministry, Fresno

Edith Siddall, Church Women United, San Diego

Renee Bauerly, Daughters of Mary and Joseph, San Pedro

Mary Gilbert, East Bay Ministers' Wives & Ministers' Widows, Oakland

Sister Mary O'Connor, Daughters of Mary and Joseph, Rancho Palos Verdes

Sister Margaret O'Rourke, Daughters of Mary and Joseph

The Rev. Dr. Keith Edwards, First Presbyterian Church, Altadena

Pastor Daren Barron, World Conquerors Church

Michelle Hatchell, World Conquerors Church

Monique Barron, World Conquerors Church

**Colorado**

Rev. Donna McWhirter, Church Women United in Colorado

**Connecticut**

Janis Hoyle, Church Women United in Connecticut, President

Betty Allen, Connecticut State Board of Church Women United

Carolyn Hardin Engelhardt, United Methodist Church

Joy Fitzgerald, Wesley United Methodist Church, South Windsor

Lois Harwick, Church Women United, Glastonbury

Sara Parker, Outreach Committee, United Methodist Church of Putnam

Candace Smith, United Methodist Church of Danielson

Rev. Stephen Volpe, Cheshire United Methodist Church

**Delaware**

Ellen Holler, Church Women United in Delaware & Maryland Upper Shore

Sister Regina Burns, Sisters of IHM, Wilmington

Sister Redempta Sweeney, IHM, St. Mark's High School

**Florida**

Dr. Debra Susie, Florida IMPACT

Nancy O'Byrne, Diocese of St. Augustine Justice and Peace Commission

Mildred Barnes, Church Women United

Dorothy Branson, Church Women United

Debra Thomas, New Directions Community Outreach, Inc.

Rev. Dr. Donald & Ms. Jane Thompson, United Methodist Church; Manatee Unitarian-Universalist

Delena Stephens-Bowen, Families with Loved Ones in Prison (FLIP), Church Women United

**Georgia**

Bettie Durrah, Church Women United  
 Mary Ann Figlino, Empowerment Program, Denver  
 Beatrice Hoffman, Oakhurst Baptist Church, Decatur

**Hawaii**

Sister Leone Drexler, Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, Wailuku

**Idaho**

Mary Knodell, Church Women United Idaho

**Illinois**

Mary Anderson, Lutheran Advocacy Network, Barrington  
 Rev. John Buttrick, Illinois Conference, United Church of Christ, Peoria  
 Reverend Fran Bates, Fox Valley Association, United Church of Christ, Libertyville  
 Ismay Ashford, DNA, Chicago  
 Robert Dell, United Church of Christ Mental Illness Network, Sandwich  
 Thomas Garlitz, Catholic Diocese of Joliet, Peace and Social Justice Ministry  
 Rev. Edward Goode, United Church of Christ/Illinois Conference, Chicago  
 Rev. Jonathan Knight, Fox Valley Association, Ohio Conference, United Church of Christ, Hampshire  
 Rev. Jennifer Kottler, Protestants for the Common Good, Chicago  
 Michael Linder, Fox Valley Association, United Church of Christ, Geneva  
 Claudia Austin, Church Women United of Illinois, Northfield  
 Edith Beach, Church Women United of Belleville  
 Sister Benita Coffey, OSB, Benedictine Sisters of Chicago  
 Rev. Ann Marie Coleman, University Church, Chicago  
 Joan Criswell, Peoria Area Church Women United  
 Joann Dennis, Church Women United - Rock Island/Milan Unit  
 Evangelist Julia Hagwood, African Methodist Episcopal Church, Evanston  
 Millicent Hankla, Church Women United - Illinois  
 Rev. Conrad Heisner, Lake Fork United Church of Christ, Atwood  
 Robin Henry, Parkview United Church of Christ, Canton  
 Sister Sue Kilduski, Chicago  
 Sister Sheila Kinsey, Justice, Peace & Integrity Office of Wheaton Franciscans, Wheaton  
 Sister Marcelline Koch, Dominican Sisters, IL  
 Laura Leon, St. Mary's Hope Lutheran Church, ELCA  
 Donna Lowe, United Church of Christ, Park Forest  
 Dr. Niva Lubin-Johnson, National Medical Association, Chicago  
 Sister Stephanie Mertens, ASC, ASC Justice and Peace Office  
 Dorothy Middleton, Church Women United, Peoria  
 Pastor James Moody, Quinn Chapel AME Church, Chicago  
 Rev. Dr. Calvin Morris, Community Renewal Society, Chicago  
 Marjorie Parker, Church Women United of Carbondale  
 Rev. Kirsten Peachey, Member, Pilgrim United Church of Christ Oak Park  
 Rev. Curran Reichert, Open Prairie United Church of Christ, Princeton  
 Ethel Russaw, Chicago Conference Lay Organization, AME Church, Chicago  
 Sister Pastor Rosita Sanchez, Iglesia Misi3n del Valle/Mission of the Valley Church, Chicago  
 Sister Patricia Schlarman, ASC, Trenton  
 Sister Joan Shalapin, ASC, Adorers of the Blood of Christ, Red Bud  
 Dr. Ron and Mary Trimmer, United Congregations of MetroEast, Mitchell

Margaret Tweet, Church Women United, Rock Island  
 Sister Carol Welp, Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters, Chicago  
 Eugene Birmingham, Immanuel United Church of Christ, Bensonville  
 Loy Tetzloff, First Congregational Church, Downers Grove, Bolingbrook  
 Seth Carey, United Church of Christ, Glen Ellen  
 Denise Griebler, St. Michael's United Church of Christ, Warrenville  
 Chuck Maney, United Church of Christ, Ottawa  
 JR Sandman, United Church of Christ, Oak Brook  
 Brenda Larnell, African Methodist Episcopal Church, Fairview Heights  
 Jane Fisler Hoffman, Illinois Conference, United Church of Christ  
 Aurelia Jackson, Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church

### **Indiana**

Rev. Stephen Gray, Indiana-Kentucky Conference, United Church of Christ, Indianapolis  
 Rita Gaither-Gant, United Methodist Women  
 Victor Frohne, United Church of Christ, LaPorte

### **Iowa**

Sister Janice Cebula, OSF, Sisters of St. Francis, Clinton  
 Rev. Kathleen Clark, Church Women United  
 Sister Jeanie Hagedorn, Sisters of Humility, Des Moines  
 Evalee Mickey, Pax Christi USA  
 Sister Peggy Nolan, Sisters of Charity, BVM Leadership Team, Dubuque  
 Sister Joy Peterson, Sisters of the Presentation, Dubuque  
 Dianna Perry, Women's Missionary Society, Bethel AME Church, Iowa City

### **Kansas**

Sister Rose Bahr, Center for Health and Wellness, Wichita  
 Jackie Helms, South Central Region, Church Women United  
 Gwen Howard, Church Women United  
 Darlene Montgomery, United Methodist Women  
 Sister Pat Nicholson, Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet  
 Sarah Peters, United Methodist Women  
 Lois Schrock, Presbyterian Women Northern Kansas  
 Barb Scott, President, United Methodist Women  
 Judith Shetter, United Methodist Women  
 Sharon Springer, United Methodist Women in Kansas  
 Leon Sequeira, MORE-2, No. Kansas City

### **Kentucky**

Rev. Peggy Owens, Mid-Kentucky Presbytery  
 Steven Johns-Boehme, Christian Church in Kentucky, Louisville  
 Wilma Bennett, Church Women United in the Louisville Area  
 Mary Carver, Church Women United  
 Lula Howard, President, Church Women United, Louisville, KY  
 Marilyn Johnson, Church Women United  
 Garnet McIntire, Flemingsburg Church Women United  
 Rose Nelson, Church Women United in Kentucky  
 Vicki Ramsier, Church Women United in Kentucky  
 Dee Reynolds, Church Women United, Lexington

Elizabeth Smith, Church Women United  
 Laura Starr RN, Church Women United-LouisvilleKY

### **Maine**

Rev. Diane Bennekamper, United Church of Christ, Cumberland  
 Rev. William Bliss, Bath United Church of Christ, Bath  
 Rev. Brad Hirst, United Church of Christ, York  
 Mrs. Heather McLaughlin, South Congregational United Church of Christ, Kennebunkport  
 Rev. Susan Savell, United Church of Christ, Brunswick  
 Rev. Dr. Susan Stonestreet, United Christian Church, Lincolnville Center  
 Carl Anderson, United Church of Christ, Portland

### **Maryland**

Rev. Brenda Cardwell, Disciples Advocacy and Witness Network, Suitland  
 Lari R. Grubbs, Christian Church Capital Area  
 Julie Erickson, Presbytery of Baltimore, Annapolis  
 N. Sharon Leatherman, Church Women United in Maryland  
 Rev. Steven Ostendorf-Snell, Grace United Church of Christ, Taneytown  
 Shirley A. Young, Church Women United, Anne Arundel County"  
 Rev. Esther Ziegler, Frederick  
 Roland England, United Church of Christ, Boonsboro

### **Massachusetts**

Sister Rena Mae Gagnon, Little Franciscans of Mary Worcester  
 Sister Carole Lombard, Sisters of St. Joseph, Brighton  
 Rev. Kristin White, Church Women United, Maryland/Rhode Island

### **Michigan**

Rev. Dr. John E. Duckworth, Interfaith Health & Hope, Westland  
 Tobi Hanna-Davies, ISAAC-Interfaith Strategy for Advocacy & Action in the Community, Kalamazoo  
 Bertha Barbee-McNeal, Metropolitan Kalamazoo Branch NAACP ACT-SO  
 Kathryn Blake, Mid Michigan District Women's Missionary Society CME  
 Rev. Joseph Gagnon, MOSES Community Organization, Marysville  
 Sister Mary Ellen Gondeck, Congregation of St. Joseph, Detroit  
 Sister Riccardina Silvestri, St. Michael Church, Deford  
 Carole M. Stow, Church Women United in Michigan / Church Women United in Bay City  
 Larry Kalajinen, First Parish Church United Church of Christ, Brunswick  
 Martha Phillips, First Congregational United Church of Christ, Waterville  
 Amy Peterson, ISAAC

### **Minnesota**

Rev. Dr. Karen Smith Sellers, Minnesota Conference United Church of Christ, Minneapolis

### **Missouri**

Rev. Dr. Deborah Patterson, International Parish Nurse Resource Center, St. Louis  
 Sister Elizabeth Ahrens, Sisters of St. Joseph, St. Louis  
 Sister Lillian Baumann, CSJ, Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, Saint Louis  
 Sister Carol Boschert, Sisters of the Most Precious Blood, O'Fallon  
 Sister Amy Hereford, Sisters of St. Joseph, St. Louis  
 Katharine Kilpatric, Church Women United  
 Melba V. McFadden, Kansas City Church Women United

Sister Patricia Murphy, CSJ, Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, St. Louis  
 Diana Oleskevich, CSJA, Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, St. Louis Province  
 DorthaMae Olsen, Church Women United  
 Kathleen Reid, Adorers of the Blood of Christ, St. Louis  
 Anne Silea, Lutheran Family & Children's Services

### **Mississippi**

Donna Gunn, Sacred Heart Parish and Family Center, Camden

### **Montana**

James Gibson, Montana People's Action  
 Janet Robideau, Executive Director, Montana People's Action, Missoula  
 Nina Cramer, Montana People's Action

### **North Carolina**

Rev. J. George Reed, North Carolina Council of Churches, Raleigh  
 Rev. Stephen W. Camp, Southern Conference, United Church of Christ, Burlington  
 Esther Megill, Church Women United  
 Dr. Loise George, Church Women United

### **Nebraska**

Carole Denton, United Methodist Church and NAMI, Grand Island  
 Donna Lightbody, Christ United Methodist Church, Lincoln

### **Nevada**

Charlotte Watkins, Lutheran Social Services of Nevada, Las Vegas

### **New Hampshire**

Mr. David Lamarre-Vincent, New Hampshire Council of Churches, Pembroke

### **New Jersey**

Rev. Dr. Dianna Hofbeck, RN, North Shore Ministry, Amish & Mennonite  
 Rev. Russell Eidmann-Hicks, United Church of Christ, Colts Neck  
 Marilyn Russell, Faith United Church of Christ

### **New York**

Rev. Dr. Joseph Sellepack, Broome County Council of Churches, Binghamton  
 Judith Trachtenberg, Congregation B'nai Jeshurun, New York  
 Mary Discher, Church Women United of Rochester  
 Marie Barker, Church Women United, Rochester  
 Sister Kathleen Clancy, Port Washington  
 Carol Elaine Deys, Church Women United of New York State, Inc.  
 Dr. Sally Dodgson, Church Women United of Rochester  
 Rev. Patrina Freeman, Church Women United of Rochester and Vicinity, Inc.  
 Gail Mengel, Church Women United, New York  
 Mrs. Lura Masters, Church Women United /Rochester  
 Eleanor Pope, Church Women United  
 Barbara Shuck, Presbyterian Church  
 Mary Smith, St. John the Baptist Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order  
 Sioux Taylor, Mt Vernon Church Women United  
 Sister Phyllis Tierney, Sisters of St. Joseph of Rochester

Jean Bartlett, Church Women United, Rochester

**Ohio**

Rev. Rebecca Tollefson, Ohio Council of Churches  
 The Rt. Rev. Thomas Breidenthal, The Episcopal Diocese of Southern Ohio, Cincinnati  
 The Rt. Rev. Mark Hollingsworth, The Episcopal Diocese of Ohio, Cleveland  
 Brenda Webster, Christian Church in Ohio, Columbus  
 Rev. George Hrbek, Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry, Cleveland  
 Alice Kenzig, Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine Health System, Cleveland  
 Joan Brown, President, Church Women United in Ohio  
 Mary Collingwood, Catholic Ministry of Health Care Professionals, Boston Heights  
 Sister Mary Jean Eucker, Centering Space  
 Ina Green, Church Women United in Greater Dayton  
 Diane Lardie, Catholic Ministry of Health Care Professionals, Shaker Heights  
 Sister Ruth Ann Patrick, Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine, Richfield  
 Jody Stevens, Church Women United of Zanesville, Mount Perry  
 Sister Ruth Ann Patrick, Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine, Richfield  
 Sister Carolyn Capuano, HM, Mercy Medical Center, Canton

**Oklahoma**

Carol Woods, First United Methodist Church, Edmond

**Oregon**

David Leslie, Executive Director, Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon, Portland

**Pennsylvania**

The Rev. Gary Harke, Pennsylvania Council of Churches, Harrisburg  
 Rev. Dr. Marja Coons-Torn, Pennsylvania Central Conference United Church of Christ, Harrisburg  
 Sister Eva A. Janning, Missionary Sisters of the Precious Blood, Reading  
 Sister Marilyn Joyce, Sisters of St. Francis, Glenshaw  
 MaryClaire Kennedy, Sisters of St. Joseph, NW Pennsylvania  
 Sister Donna McGartland, Sisters of St. Francis, Millvale  
 Sister Myron Rebel, Pittsburg  
 Margaret Shields, Missionary Sisters of the Holy Rosary, Bryn Mawr

**Rhode Island**

Helen Schall, Justice and Witness Division, Rhode Island Conference, United Church of Christ, Barrington  
 Rev. Mary Aberg, United Church of Christ, Bristol  
 Rev. Beverley Edwards, Providence  
 Dr. James Findlay, Kingston United Church of Christ, Peace Dale  
 Warren Marble, First Congregational Church United Church of Christ, Warwick  
 Rev. David Shire, Newman Congregational United Church of Christ, Emeritus, Cranston  
 Barbara Silvis, Central Congregational United Church of Christ, Providence, IL, Warwick  
 Ann Wood, Social Action and Justice, Barrington  
 R. Jack Whitehead, Kingston Congregational Church, Kingston

**South Carolina**

Charles Noble, Cooperative Health Center

**South Dakota**

Karen Nash, First United Methodist Church

**Tennessee**

Kathy Jeffries, Church Women United, Tennessee

**Texas**

Bee Moorhead, Texas IMPACT

Mary Alice Rice, Church Women United in Houston and Texas

Coretha Loughridge, Northeast Area of the Christian Church in the Southwest, Tyler

Sister Ida Berresheim, Sisters of St. Joseph, El Paso

Sister Sylvia Chacon, Adorers of the Blood of Christ, El Paso

Mary Compton, Church Women United in Texas

Rev. Michael Mumme, Faith United Church

Charlotte Newton, United Methodist Women

**Virginia**

Ann W. Rasmussen, Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy Richmond

Linda Bales, General Board of Church & Society, United Methodist Church

Rev. Dr. Jerrold Foltz, United Church of Christ, Centreville

Bridget Hengle, Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Richmond, Smart Smiles Program, Richmond

Sonja Lauren, The Covered Smile

**Washington**

Darel Grothaus, Washington Association of Churches, Seattle

Rev. Paul Benz, Lutheran Public Policy Office of Washington State, Seattle

Sanford Brown, Church Council of Greater Seattle

Winifred Coleman, Church Women United, Greater Seattle Unit, Seattle

Jeannine Lish, Church Women United - Washington/N. Idaho

The Very Rev. Father Rubye-Lew-Huey PANG, Vicar General, The Charismatic Anglican-Catholic Church, Bellevue

Rev. Thomas Quigley, Former President Director, Church Council of Greater Seattle

**Wisconsin**

Rabbi Jonathan Biatch, Temple Beth El, Madison

Reverend Joel Deaner-Rogers, United Methodist Church, Brookfield

Grace Golata, School Sisters of St. Francis, Milwaukee

Ernabelle Madushaw, Church Women United

Rabbi Bonnie Margulis, Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, Madison

Patricia Sheehan, Church Women United

**Wyoming**

The Rev. Warren Murphy, Wyoming Association of Churches, Cody