

NO. 0724
(SENSE OF THE ASSEMBLY)
CHILDREN'S HEALTH CARE

My joy is gone, grief is upon me, my heart is sick. Hark, the cry of my poor people from far and wide in the land: For the hurt of my poor people I am hurt, I mourn, and dismay has taken hold of me. Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?

Jeremiah 8:18-19, 21-22.

For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I am creating; for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy, and its people as a delight. I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and delight in my people; no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it, or the cry of distress. No more shall there be in it an infant that lives but a few days, or an old person who does not live out a lifetime; for one who dies at a hundred years will be considered a youth, and one who falls short of a hundred will be considered accursed. They shall not labor in vain, or bear children for calamity; for they shall be offspring blessed by the LORD-- and their descendants as well.

Isaiah 65:17-20, 23

Then they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the way?" But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another who was the greatest. He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all." Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, "Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me."

Mark 9:33-37

Background Information¹

1. Over nine million children in the United States - one in every nine - have no health insurance coverage and millions more are underinsured. Every 46 seconds, another child is born uninsured in America.
2. It costs less to provide health insurance coverage to children than to any other group of people.
3. The majority of uninsured children live in two-parent households. Almost 90% live in families where at least one parent works.
4. Children without health insurance live sicker and die sooner than children with health insurance.
5. Preventive health care, such as newborn hearing screenings and immunizations, not only save lives and improves health, but also saves money.

¹ Background comes from the Children's Defense Fund. See Top 10 Facts about Children's Health; Fall, 2006 and the CDF's National Observance of Children's Sabbath @ Manual, Volume 15 and from the U.S. Department of Health and Social Services website www.cms.hhs.gov/LowCostHealthInsFamChild/

6. Reading scores and school attendance of uninsured children improve dramatically after they become insured.
7. The United States stands virtually alone among industrialized nations in not guaranteeing access to health care for children. The U.S. spends a higher portion of its gross domestic product on health care than any other country but ranks 24th among the 30 similar nations in infant mortality rate and 22nd in low-birth weight.
8. In 2006 Congress and the President failed to take the necessary steps to provide better coverage for more children. In fact legislation that was passed makes it more difficult for poor children to get necessary health and mental health care.
9. Americans over 65 have access to health coverage under the federal Medicare program regardless of income or state of residency.. Although children can't provide for themselves, they have no such guarantee.
10. The existing public health care programs, Medicaid and/or the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), are run by the states, with different standards for eligibility, cost sharing, and benefits in each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Chronic budget shortfalls, often confusing enrollment processes, and dramatic variation in eligibility and coverage from state to state prevent millions of currently eligible children from living up to their God-given potential in school and life. A child's chance to live, be healthy, and learn should never depend on the lottery of geography.
11. In 2007, Congress considers the reauthorization of SCHIP funding which will likely establish children's health policy for the next five years. Citizens of faith have a special opportunity and responsibility to insist that our leaders take the next logical, moral, and achievable steps to ensure health and mental health coverage for all children in the United States.

WHEREAS, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) adopted Resolution No. 9915 at the General Assembly meeting in Cincinnati, Ohio, October 8-12, 1999, calling all members in the United States to:

1. Work for the establishment of health care for all, regardless of the ability to pay, supporting public policy advocacy through study and education, and supporting preventive health care initiatives; and
2. Advocate for initiatives both public and private to provide health care treatment for short and long term illness, and for treatment and care for physical and mental disabilities.
3. Advocate for a balance between cost containment and equitable service provision.

WHEREAS, Scripture affirms that every child is a loved and treasured child of God created in God's image; children have special insights into the kingdom of God that the world needs (Luke 15:17); and

WHEREAS, “every child and family has a right to guaranteed quality, comprehensive health care [and deserves] to live in a healthy environment that allows them to thrive²”; and

WHEREAS, Scripture calls us be bold in our faith and strong in our call to “do what is just” (Micah 6.8); and

WHEREAS, all people of faith must work to ensure that our government provides adequate funding for programs that combat physical, social and economic conditions that place children at risk or diminish children’s ability to achieve their full potential in the world; and

WHEREAS, merely advocating re-authorization funding for SCHIP (State Children’s Health Insurance Program) without substantial policy and funding changes will still leave millions of children without adequate health care, and will perpetuate the inequities between states.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) meeting in Fort Worth, Texas July 21-25, 2007, resolve to address issues of children’s health care, Biblically and theologically; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) encourages local congregations to educate themselves, their communities and their elected officials on children’s health care nationally and locally; and advocate for immediate action to ensure health and mental health care for every child in America in 2007 as a first step to adequate health care for all.

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The General Board recommends that the General Assembly
ADOPT Business Item No. 0724. (Debate time 12 minutes).

² *The Church and Children: Vision and Goals for the 21st Century*, National Council of Churches of United States of America; November, 11, 2004. lines 278-79