



ARCHBISHOP'S RESIDENCE

2101 COMMONWEALTH AVENUE
BRIGHTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02135-3192

August 7, 2003

The Honorable Thomas M. Finneran
Speaker of the House
State House - Room 356
Boston, MA. 02133

Dear Speaker Finneran,

We have worked together on many issues. At the outset, I want to repeat my appreciation of your leadership in the many instances in which we have sought to advance the common good of the people of Massachusetts. I am writing to you today with great concern about the more than ten thousand legal immigrants who recently lost their health coverage.

As you know, the Catholic community brings strong convictions and broad experience to providing necessary support to immigrants. We recognize and affirm the sanctity of human life and the inherent dignity of every human being. We consider access to health care to be a basic human right, necessary for the development and maintenance of life and for the ability of human beings to realize the fullness of their dignity. A just society is one that protects and promotes the fundamental rights of its members – with special attention to meeting the basic needs of the poor and underserved, including the need for safe and affordable health care.

I understand that the state budget crisis has forced the legislature and the Governor to focus on what is essential. Is it not essential that we sustain the most vulnerable among us? Joe Doolin tells me about a woman who is representative of the many such cases Catholic Charities is helping with. "Nicole" is a 35-year old Haitian woman in need of a kidney transplant. She undergoes dialysis three days each week and is waiting for the arrival of a family member from Haiti to offer her a kidney. It is essential that she remain on dialysis but she cannot do so without health coverage. Catholic Charities will continue to do all that we can to help this woman, but government must not cede responsibility for the challenges facing immigrant families that go well beyond the capabilities of voluntary charity.

It is sound public policy to allow immigrants to access preventive care when they are healthy and necessary corrective care when they are ill. It is also just. All Americans are in debt to our immigrant sisters and brothers for their contributions to our

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economy. They mow our lawns, cook our food, provide care for our parents and for our children. Here in Massachusetts, they have provided the population growth necessary to fuel our economy. Throughout our nation the immigrant labor force makes an invaluable contribution to our national economy. These hard working people, who often toil at more than one job, pay taxes and should not be disenfranchised in their time of need by losing their ability to access adequate health care.

The supplemental budget resolution you are about to consider must include provisions to help those immigrants who currently lack health care coverage.

I am grateful for your leadership on this important public health concern and I urge your support to ensure that health care benefits to immigrants are restored.

Asking God to bless you and your colleagues as you seek to serve the people of the Commonwealth, I am

Devotedly yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Sean O'Malley".

Archbishop of Boston