



CARDINAL'S RESIDENCE
2101 COMMONWEALTH AVENUE
BRIGHTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02135

July 10, 1996

The Honorable William Weld
Governor of Massachusetts
The State House
Boston, MA 02110

Dear Governor Weld:

It has been brought to my attention that you have before you House Bill #6107 - "An Act to Improve Health Care Access here in the Commonwealth."

This Bill, as you know, was passed overwhelmingly by both branches of the Legislature and sent to you for your consideration on July 8th. As you contemplate your decision, I would ask that you seriously consider signing the Bill.

The Massachusetts Catholic Conference representing the four Catholic Dioceses of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts through Attorney Gerald D'Avolio has been working with the coalition supporting this legislation.

The Bishops have been very vocal in the past in supporting and protecting the most vulnerable in our society. The 160,000 uninsured children in the Commonwealth, the elderly who are on Medicare and those persons with disabilities whose incomes are well below the poverty level, all come under the umbrella of vulnerability and will benefit from this legislation. There are 160,000 uninsured children in the Commonwealth, up from 90,000 in 1989. To begin to address this serious issue and allow "kids to be kids," this Bill would dramatically shrink the number of uninsured children by expanding Medicaid eligibility to children up to age 12 whose family incomes are well below the federal poverty line (200%).

The Bill also creates a prescription drug subsidy program for people on Medicare who cannot afford to purchase prescription drug coverage through their "Medigap" policy. With sky-rocketing prescription drug cost, indigent seniors have found themselves in the position of choosing between basic needs and necessary medication. This Bill would provide timely assistance to those in desperate need of assistance.

The Bill simplifies and improves access to health care coverage to persons with disabilities whose incomes are well below the poverty level (133%) by avoiding the Medicaid spend down process.

The access programs are funded with a combination of new federal matching funds and an increase in the cigarette levy of 25 cents per pack. The Bill provides desperately needed health insurance to the uninsured without detriment to the overall growth of the Massachusetts economy.

In view of the above, I therefore would encourage you to sign this critical piece of legislation.

With best personal regards and asking God to bless you, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Archbishop of Boston

BCL/ac