

SVDP reiterates support for health care, human life

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Several major Catholic organizations that have expressed their support for health care reform also recently have said that any health care plan proposed in the U.S. legislature should protect dignity of all human life — including the unborn.

Catholic Charities USA, the Catholic Health Association and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul USA, are among those who have spoken in favor providing health care for all, including the poor and vulnerable. However, leaders of those organizations have reiterated that any health care reform cannot mandate abortion coverage or other provisions that would stand as an attack on unborn human life. (See related story, Page 6.)

Joe Flannigan, the national president of the U.S. Society of St. Vincent de Paul, based in St. Louis, said in a statement issued last week that the Society “does not support nor will it support any legislation, provision or amendment that fails to uphold the sanctity and dignity of human life.”

“Further, we will continue to work with Catholic Health Association and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and Catholic Charities USA to ensure that any legislation will continue to support the conscience clause protection to health care workers and that the Hyde exception continues to ensure no abortion can be funded with federal funds.”

Zip Rzeppa, executive director of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul of St. Louis, noted that “we certainly support the Church’s teachings on life. We want to avoid any misconception that the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in any way shape or form would support legislation that would include the federal funding of abortion or

forcing health care workers to assist or participate in abortion in any way.”

Rzeppa said that the Society in St. Louis works with the poor on health care issues. Last year, for example, it launched a program with St. Louis-based Express Scripts to provide prescription medications.

“Our Vincentians, who collectively made more than 38,000 home visits last year, often come upon people who cannot afford their prescription medications,” said Rzeppa.

More than 160 generic drugs were provided to those in economic need. Thousands of people in the St. Louis area have benefited from the program, he added.

Keeping consistent with the teachings of the Church, the Society does not include contraceptives in the list of prescriptions made available through the program, Rzeppa noted.

“The Society is always cognizant first and foremost of our Catholic faith and the teachings of the Church,” he said.

In 2004, the St. Vincent de Paul Society USA and its Voice of the Poor Committee developed a position statement on health care reform.

The Society noted that its position statement was guided by Catholic social and moral teachings, as well as pastoral letters from the U.S. bishops and papal encyclicals. To read the entire statement, visit www.servingthepoor.org.