



CIRCLE *of* PROTECTION

STATEMENT BY JIM WALLIS AND DAVID BECKMANN CO-CHAIRS OF THE CIRCLE OF PROTECTION

Jesus tells us that how we treat the most vulnerable, the poor, and the sick, is how we treat him—how we treat Christ himself. This is a week of crucial votes on health care bills and we must remind Senators who call themselves Christians that the question before their vote must be: how any bill would treat Christ himself, who says “I was sick,” and “as you have done to the least of these you have done to me.”

The Circle of Protection includes leaders of church bodies and organizations from all the families of U.S. Christianity. In our recent Circle of Protection statement we said, “The biblical prophets remind us that how we treat the most marginal and vulnerable among us is the test of a nation's moral righteousness—telling kings and rulers that the measures of their governance is the well-being of those most in need. But deep cuts in Medicaid would put at risk the well-being of millions of our fellow Americans—especially the weakest, the oldest, and children most at risk.”

Republicans and Democrats should work together in a bipartisan fashion through regular order by holding hearings, consulting with stakeholders and experts, and listening to the American people to fix the problems with the Affordable Care Act's individual marketplaces without making cuts to Medicaid or depriving tens of millions of Americans of health insurance. We are grateful for the leadership of many senators, including Susan Collins and Lisa Murkowski, who have acted on those principles.

If the Senate is unable to pass comprehensive healthcare legislation, the Senate's leadership may introduce a “skinny” repeal bill designed to delegate the preparation of final legislation to a Republican controlled conference committee. This would almost certainly lead to legislation that would make deep cuts to Medicaid and harm vulnerable people in other ways.

Therefore, we are asking Christians across the country to tell their Senators to vote NO to cuts in Medicaid, vote NO on a bill that take health coverage and care from millions of people, vote NO on a bill that would leave it to a majority conference committee to prepare final legislation, and vote NO on any bill that does not have bi-partisan support.

The votes this week are critical for tens of millions of Americans, especially for “the least of these.” We must speak and act now to put our faith into action for a health care bill that does no harm; that includes and does not exclude people from health coverage. The moment is urgent, and our mission is to protect health and healing.

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