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March 2, 2010

Honorable Dave Heineman
Governor
State of Nebraska
P.O. Box 94848
Lincoln, NE 68509-4848

Dear Governor Heineman:

We write jointly as the Catholic Bishops serving in Nebraska to express our high level of concern and disappointment resulting from your decision to oppose continuation of prenatal health care coverage for unborn children whose mothers are poor and undocumented. We respectfully ask you to reconsider this position and to work with the Legislature to provide access to prenatal care and services for all eligible unborn children, regardless of their mothers' immigration status, pursuant to the unborn child option under the federal Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP).

This is an important and urgent Pro Life matter, Governor. Obviously, the need for, and importance of, prenatal care and services only exist when a woman is pregnant, carrying an unborn child in her womb. Thus, the true and ultimate beneficiary of prenatal care and services is each individual unborn child, who is not an illegal immigrant and who will soon be a U.S. citizen upon his/her birth. Denying prenatal care coverage in these circumstances of family poverty is an affront to human dignity and pro life principles. It is a terrible injustice, which could do great harm to the lives of children at a very vulnerable stage in their development. What's worse, the lack of access to coverage for such care could be a decisive factor in leading some pregnant women to choose abortion over childbirth, each time a tragedy.

Assisting unborn children to have a healthier start to life outside the womb makes abundant sense, not only from an economic standpoint, since the healthcare needs are likely to be considerably greater without the benefits of prenatal care and services, but also from a human rights standpoint as well. The immigration status of their mothers should not be allowed to adversely affect the health and well-being of the unborn children. When balanced against the legitimate public-policy concerns about illegal immigration, caring for the unborn children should be the higher priority, as the right thing to do.

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Again, Governor, please reconsider your opposition. Instead, encourage the Legislature to enact the legislation necessary to continue this critically important health care coverage for unborn children.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend George J. Lucas
Archbishop of Omaha

Most Reverend Fabian W. Bruskewitz
Bishop of Lincoln

Most Reverend William J. Dendinger
Bishop of Grand Island