



## FLORIDA CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS CATHOLIC DAYS AT THE CAPITOL

### ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

#### Key Message:

**Support: SB 7016 (Health Policy Committee) / HB 1549 (Grant)**

***Please support health care reform that expands access to health care for all Floridians, creates a more equitable system of care for the poor and those living with disabilities, and adequately addresses the full continuum of patients' needs at every stage of life.***

#### **ADDITIONAL TALKING POINTS:**

- Health care is a basic right that protects human dignity.
- We support expanding access to high-quality health care for all Floridians.
- We seek a health care system that addresses the whole person—i.e., physical ailments as well as the psychological, social, and spiritual needs of each patient.
- We support health care reform that provides adequate health care for the most vulnerable and marginalized people among us—the poor, the uninsured, and the underinsured.
- A person living with disabilities has innate worth and dignity and deserves access to adequate health care services.
- We support responsible stewardship of scarce health care resources.

#### **BILL PROVISIONS:**

The primary goals of this health care legislation, known as “Live Healthy,” are to:

- Expand access to care by recruiting and retaining a highly skilled health care workforce, including but not limited to primary care doctors, pediatricians, obstetricians, other specialists, nurses, physician assistants, and mental health professionals.
- Support patients at every stage of life by improving access to preventive services, primary care, and mental health care services and reducing reliance on expensive, ineffective emergency rooms.
- Protect the vulnerable by incentivizing more doctors to serve the poor and increasing funding for individuals living with disabilities.

#### **BACKGROUND:**

Florida's population is likely to grow by almost 300,000 new residents every year for the next five years, jumping from 22.6 million residents to 25.4 million over the next ten years. As Florida's population grows, our residents are also getting older, with 21% over the age of 65—a time in life when the need for health care services increases.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <http://edr.state.fl.us/content/conferences/population/demographicsummary.pdf>;  
<https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/interactive/exploring-age-groups-in-the-2020-census.html>

Despite this increasing demand for health care, estimates project that Florida will have a potential shortfall of nearly 18,000 doctors and 59,000 nurses by 2035. That means our available workforce will only meet 77% of Florida's health care needs. Additionally, many of our doctors are nearing retirement age, with data suggesting that their average age is 53 with about 33% over the age of 60.

Florida already ranks 44<sup>th</sup> in the country in access to health care, and Senate President Kathleen Passidomo (R-Naples) summarized Florida's health care challenges this way:

The fact is, we will need more maternity rooms to welcome new Floridians to the family. We will need more services for our elders to live out their golden years safely and with dignity. We will need more primary care providers who play a vital role as the main point of contact in the health care system for families and seniors.

With this legislation, policymakers seek to ensure that the state's health care system will keep pace with Florida's growing demand for care by growing the health care workforce and providing more options and opportunities to "Live Healthy."

#### **POTENTIAL OBJECTION AND RESPONSE:**

**OBJECTION:** Health care reform should do even more to expand access to health care for the poor. Florida is one of only 10 states that have not expanded Medicaid, the country's health care program for the poor, to more people under the Affordable Care Act.

**RESPONSE:** We agree that access to health care is a basic human right for all people—especially for the most vulnerable and marginalized among us. We support Medicaid expansion but we also appreciate that many of our leaders want to explore expanding access in other ways. As such, we appreciate that this legislation aims to increase access and improve outcomes by expanding Florida's workforce and providing more preventive services, primary care, and mental health services.

#### **SPONSOR AND CO-SPONSORS:**

**SB 7016** – Sponsor: Health Policy Committee

**HB 1549** – Sponsor: Grant, House Majority Leader

#### **STATUS:**

**SB 7016** – Passed Senate (39-0)

**HB 1549** – Passed House Select Committee on Health Innovation (11-0); On Health Care Appropriations Subcommittee Agenda, 02/06/24; also referred to Health & Human Services Committee

***For additional information, please contact:***

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