

Chairman Hagedorn, Chairman Loertscher, and Members of the Joint Working Group:

Good afternoon! I thank all of you for performing this critical public service.

I'm Frank Monasterio and I've come from Mountain Home this afternoon to urge you to support essential medical coverage for all who do not now qualify for Medicaid, but who earn too much to receive assistance through the Idaho medical insurance exchange.

I belong to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. A major and distinctive part of our work involves visits to struggling families in their homes when they call our helpline. We connect with them and see how we can offer support. And when we visit, we often find family members gravely limited and distressed because of their inability to afford the medical treatment. They may be unable to work or to fulfill the duties of parenthood because of an untreated medical disorder. Their cancers may go unattended until it is too late, or their mental illness be untreated because medicine is too costly. They may be dying due to a lack of timely treatment. And families facing huge medical bills spiral into destitution.

I think of a woman—a single parent—I met on an afternoon of home visits. She could not leave her home to look for work because she could not pay for the asthma inhaler her doctor had prescribed. Asthma is a relatively common and, generally, a treatable condition. With proper medicine, which is not always cheap, sufferers may work, parent, and live normally. But because of her inability to afford that medicine, this young woman lost her freedom of movement and her ability to be self-sufficient. And her otherwise chronic, manageable asthma remained life-threatening, possibly resulting in expensive emergency-room visits.

Our Society lives out Catholic Social Teaching, including the belief in the infinite dignity of each human person and his corresponding right to health care, as proclaimed by Pope Francis. And yet, we find that Idaho families often lack the funds to afford intensely needed medical care.

We ask the Working Group to support a full solution that provides essential coverage to the many Idahoans living in the coverage gap through federal and state funding.

Thank you!

--Frank C. Monasterio
Mountain Home, Idaho
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