



October 3, 2019

Most Reverend Robert J. Carlson  
Archbishop of St. Louis  
Archdiocese of St. Louis

Most Reverend W. Shawn McKnight  
Bishop of Jefferson City  
Diocese of Jefferson City

Most Reverend James V. Johnston  
Bishop of Kansas City/St. Joseph  
Diocese of Kansas City/St. Joseph

Most Reverend Edward M. Rice  
Bishop of Springfield/Cape Girardeau  
Diocese of Springfield/Cape Girardeau

Most Reverend Mark S. Rivotuso  
Auxiliary Bishop of St. Louis  
Archdiocese of St. Louis

Your Excellencies:

On behalf of SSM Health, Mercy, and Ascension, we want to express our sincere gratitude for your thoughtful consideration on how Medicaid could best serve the poor and vulnerable moving forward in the state of Missouri. SSM Health and Mercy represent two of the largest Catholic health systems in Missouri, and Ascension—headquartered in St. Louis—is one of the largest Catholic health systems in the country. We are all committed to advancing a common mission to provide exceptional health services to the most poor and vulnerable in our communities. Based on our experiences elsewhere, we know that Medicaid expansion can improve Catholic healthcare’s ability to live out our shared mission, improve our reach and service to the most vulnerable and those with the greatest need. We ask that you prayerfully consider joining us in supporting the ballot initiative to expand Medicaid in Missouri.

As healing ministries of the Catholic Church, our organizations’ support for expanding Medicaid coverage is grounded in our shared belief that healthcare is a basic human right essential to human flourishing. In states that have expanded their Medicaid programs, our health systems have seen enhanced access to coverage; improved access to care, utilization of services, affordability of care, and financial security among the poor and vulnerable; and better financial stability for hospitals and clinics serving rural and underserved communities. This is not only our shared experience, but proven outcomes as the Kaiser Family Foundation found in their recent literature review of more than 324 quantitative and qualitative studies of impacts tied to Medicaid expansion.<sup>1</sup> In seeing these outcomes for our patients, we know that Medicaid expansion can be a successful avenue to promote and protect the human dignity of all.

Our support for Medicaid expansion is consistent with and strengthened by our strong support for the Hyde Amendment, conscience protections and religious freedom. The ability of Catholic healthcare in Missouri to follow *The Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Healthcare Services* is protected in

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<sup>1</sup> Antonisse, L., Garfield, R., Rudowitz, R. and Guth, M. (2019, August). The effects of Medicaid Expansion under the ACA: Updated Findings from a Literature Review. *Kaiser Family Foundation*.

Medicaid by numerous federal health care laws, including the Hyde Amendment and the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA), and some of the strongest state laws in the country for religious freedom and against abortion. Support for religious freedom laws and the Hyde Amendment remain strong in Congress and in the unlikely scenario that the Hyde amendment was ever withdrawn, Catholic healthcare would remain protected by RFRA and would continue to oppose any public funding for abortion. Just as we have done consistently in other jurisdictions, we believe that we can expand Medicaid coverage while also sustaining conscience protections for Catholic healthcare and other pro-life providers.

Finally, we have done our due diligence to ensure that expanding Medicaid would not divert resources from other critical safety net or public programs funded by the state. Analysis performed by the Institute for Public Health at Washington University found that due to an enhanced federal match for certain covered populations, in combination with savings expected from other line-items in the state budget, expanding Medicaid would have been close to budget neutral and potentially even could have had an estimated savings of \$29M for FY2020.<sup>2</sup> Should the ballot initiative to expand Medicaid pass and the fiscal impact deviate from the original estimate, we are committed to continued engagement with other stakeholders to finding the best financing solution for all Missourians.

**As you consider how best to engage in this effort, we ask that you consider giving your public support for the ballot initiative in the near future.** Your collective authority, moral guidance, and leadership would provide a powerful and meaningful voice in this movement. If you should have any questions or doubts as to how Medicaid expansion is consistent with our shared responsibilities to protect and promote the inherent dignity of all human life from conception until natural death, to foster the Common Good and to act on behalf of justice, we would welcome the opportunity to speak with you directly.

Thank you for your continued leadership and support of Catholic healthcare.

Respectfully,

Laura Kaiser  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
SSM Health

Patrick McCrudden  
Chief Mission Integration Officer  
SSM Health

Lynn Britton  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
Mercy

Brian O'Toole, PhD  
Senior Vice President, Mission and Ethics  
Mercy

Joseph R. Impicciche, JD, MHA  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
Ascension

Sister Maureen McGuire, DC  
Executive Vice President, Mission Integration  
Ascension

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<sup>2</sup> Center for Health Economics and Policy. (2019, February). Analysis of the Fiscal Impact of Medicaid Expansion in Missouri. *Institute for Public Health at Washington University*.