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September 1, 2006

Citizens' Health Care Working Group
7201 Wisconsin Avenue, Suite 575
Bethesda, MD 20814

To the Citizen's Health Care Working Group:

The Council of the United University Church, a Presbyterian and United Methodist congregation located in Los Angeles on the campus of the University of Southern California, commends you for your *Health Care that Works for All Americans* report, which points to the need for a fundamental change in health care in this nation. We agree wholeheartedly that the present health delivery system is not working for many Americans, especially the poor, the aging, women, children, people with disabilities and people of color. Even middle income earners are having difficulty finding affordable, quality care. We look forward to the day when there will be a national comprehensive healthcare plan for all Americans.

While we agree with your report's interim recommendations, we want to call special attention to the one defining the benefits that should be included in a "core" package for all Americans. It is our belief that core benefits and services should be selected through an independent, fair, transparent, and scientific process that focuses on providing service to the consumer. We do not believe that the delivery of services should be hindered by considerations such as those laid out in documents like *The Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services*. Since nearly one in six Americans is treated in a Catholic health care institution every year, it is important that the Working Group deal with this reality head on.

Specifically, we recommend that no sectarian restrictions be placed on providing patients with comprehensive AIDS prevention information, fertility services, artificial insemination, tubal ligations, vasectomies, condom distribution, contraceptive medication and devices, "morning after" pills, abortion and a wide range of end-of-life health services. To limit the availability of any of these services solely because one segment of the religious community in America deems them immoral is, in our estimation, unacceptable. This is especially true in poorer communities that have limited health care options to begin with.

We await your final report with anticipation and with the hope that you will address our concerns.

Sincerely,

The Rev. Frank Wulf
Pastor & Moderator of the Council

Ms. Cheryl McDonald
Clerk of the Council