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Religious Leaders Call for Justice: Restore Medicaid Coverage to Those Cut in 2005

The Missouri Churches Uniting in Christ (MOCUIC) and the Missouri Christians Against Racism and Poverty (MOCARP) held a press conference in the Missouri State Capitol today to issue a united call for social and economic justice. The focus of the religious leaders at this event was the need to restore Medicaid coverage to the 114,000 -180,000 people who were cut by legislation passed in 2005.

“In 2005, the administration said that we had to cut low-wage workers, people with disabilities, the elderly and children from Medicaid coverage because the state didn’t have enough money,” said Bishop Paul A. Stewart, Sr. of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, St. Louis. “Now we have a surplus. Our first priority should be to restore coverage to those cut.”

“I recently heard a single mother in Kansas City speak about her anguish over the loss of Medicaid coverage for her four-year old asthmatic child. A \$2 a month increase in her wages meant that she now had to cover the \$200 medication expense out of her meager budget,” said Bishop Gerald Mansholt, Central States Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Kansas City. “That is a gross injustice, and we, as church leaders of the state of Missouri, deplore it.”

“As people of faith, we have a moral obligation to stand for justice for all Missourians. Health care is a necessity and those cut from Medicaid should have their coverage restored,” said Bishop Robert Schnase, The Missouri Conference of the United Methodist Church.

“Without access to health care, those who are struggling in our communities and in our congregations cannot reach their full potential,” said Elly Commings, Vice-Moderator, Giddings-Lovejoy, Presbytery, Florissant.

“Scripture speaks of walking with the poor not on them,” said Rev. Dr. Danny Stewart, Regional Minister, The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Mid-America, Jefferson City “This demands of us that we witness for justice in access to the necessities of life including access to health care.”

“Though many of us work with and for charities including charity hospitals, we know that charity health care as a model won’t work and that currently, charity hospitals are losing millions of dollars each month providing care for the uninsured including those cut from Medicaid,” said Bishop Barry, Episcopal Diocese of West Missouri, Kansas City.

Rev. Frieda Cash-Bady, Pastor, Quinn Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church, Jefferson City said, “We have people in our communities and in our congregations who struggle with low wages and no health care. In 2005, thousands of working, single parents were cut from Medicaid coverage. This should be restored.”

“Each of these church leaders has spoken from their perspective as a leader of a denomination, but what is most significant is that they have spoken here today with a united voice on behalf of justice,” Rev. Patrice Rosner, Director Churches Uniting in Christ, St. Louis.

Rev. Dr. James Hill, Executive Director of the Baptist General Convention of Missouri said, “We speak collectively and with a united voice about the moral imperative of justice for all, especially the poor. This is rooted deep in our faith.”

“It is especially troubling that so many children in Missouri are without the basics in health care access. I know we can do better,” said Rev. Anthony Witherspoon, Washington Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, St. Louis.

Rev. Char Burch, Interim Conference Minister, Missouri Mid-South Conference, United Church of Christ said, “Our public policies are a reflection of who we are. We have gathered from across the state because we are deeply concerned that many of Missouri’s children and families do not have adequate health care.”

The ten member denominations of Churches Uniting in Christ are: African Methodist Episcopal Church, African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, The Episcopal Church, International Council of Community Churches, Moravian Church Northern Province, Presbyterian Church USA, United Church of Christ, and The United Methodist Church. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is a CUIC partner in Mission and Dialogue and the Roman Catholic Church is an observer. Recognizing the seriousness of racism and poverty the ten members expanded in MOCARP to include other denominations such as the Baptist General Convention of Missouri and others.

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