

D[<sup>s1</sup>]ate[<sup>s2</sup>]

Address[<sup>s3</sup>]

Dear Senator[<sup>s4</sup>]/Congressman

I[<sup>s5</sup>] am writing to you as a member of Mennonite Church USA to inform you about an action taken by the delegate body at our biennial convention held early in July in Columbus, Ohio. The attached resolution[<sup>s6</sup>] asks “our members and congregations to urge their congressional representatives to support legislation that would extend access to healthcare to all Americans, particularly the poor and disadvantaged” and commits our church to “work together with others to bring about this result.”

Mennonite Church USA is a Christian denomination with 105,000 members. Mennonites have a long history of involvement in the provision of health care for the needy. In particular, many of our members worked in mental hospitals as conscientious objectors during World War II, and after the war Mennonites went on to establish a number of mental hospitals and to make a major contribution to mental health reform in the United States[<sup>s7</sup>].

My personal commitment to health care for the needy is based in scripture[<sup>s8</sup>]. Indeed, the resolution Mennonite Church USA adopted this month built on an earlier resolution adopted at our 2005 convention that articulated our theology of health care access. That resolution states: “Because the scriptural test of a just nation is how it treats its weakest members (Micah 6:8, Amos 5:24, Jeremiah 5:26-29), we will be clear and consistent advocates to policymakers on behalf of public health matters and access to healthcare for everyone.” Our witness on the issue of access to health care is also grounded in our *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*, which states that “We also witness by being ambassadors for Christ, calling the nations (and all persons and institutions) to move toward justice, peace, and compassion for all people.” Finally it is an outworking of the vision statement of our church, “God calls us to be followers of Jesus Christ and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to grow as communities of grace, joy and peace, so that God's healing and hope flow through us to the world.”

We do not as a denomination endorse any particular health reform legislation or approach to health care reform. Our resolution, however, urges consideration of one key principle for reform—priority for access to health care for all, and particularly for the poor and disadvantaged. We urge you to make this principle your priority as well. I hope to hear from you soon that you[<sup>s9</sup>] support this principle[<sup>s10</sup>].

The final clause of our resolution states that “we will pray for healthcare access for Americans across our land, as well as those working on behalf of this issue.” This Sunday, July 26, our congregation prayed for you[<sup>s11</sup>] by name as you consider this momentous and difficult issue[<sup>s12</sup>]. We commit ourselves to continual prayer for you and other government leaders that our country may be just and compassionate.

Sincerely,

Menna Hernandez, director of health care services for local school system[<sup>s13</sup>]

[s1]Neat, handwritten letters 'rise to the top of the pile.' Form letters and petitions simply don't receive the same attention.

[s2]For best results on this timely issue, fax your letter to your congressperson's DC address.

[s3]Include your address so your congressperson knows you are a constituent and so you can receive a personal reply.

[s4]See <http://www3.capwiz.com/c-span/dbq/officials> to search for your government's contact information.

[s5]State your purpose clearly and concisely.

[s6]Be sure to also fax the resolution.

[s7]Add local information about health care involvement here.

[s8]Add more here about your personal commitment. Explain how your experience, observations or Christian faith shape your opinion.

[s9]Ask for a response or ask a question.

[s10]Many congresspersons have information on their website about their position on health care access. Comment on their information if possible.

[s11]Be constructive and supportive.

[s12]Limit your letter to one page, especially since you are faxing the Mennonite Church USA Healthcare Resolution with your letter.

[s13]Use your title if you have one.