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# news release

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **NEW HEALTH CARE BILLS PROMPT QUESTIONS OF CONSCIENCE:**

### **Disability Advocates Are Concerned About Rationing by Category**

**AGOURA HILLS, Calif., Nov. 25, 2009** – As politicians continue to debate the new health care bills, religious organizations around the country express specific concerns regarding some of the language in the bill, and whether or not it truly serves the best interests of the American people. Disability advocates at Joni and Friends (JAF) Christian Institute on Disability (CID), first and foremost, question the decision-making authorities behind patient care.

“The language in the bills is still very vague with regard to gatekeepers,” said CID Public Policy Director Dr. Kathy McReynolds. “I am concerned that decisions regarding patient care will be made by someone other than the patient and physician working together. A disinterested politician is not going to have a connection to that patient or be able to identify intrinsic factors about that person’s disability.”

Another point of concern for Dr. McReynolds and her colleagues at JAF is the Comparative Effectiveness Research Center that is proposed in the bills. “This is a huge concern because it could have serious implications for those who are most vulnerable,” Dr. McReynolds added. “The Comparative Effectiveness Research Center could bring about rationing by category. Evidence-based medicine could possibly present the same kind of challenges if it is not applied from a patient-centered perspective.”

According to the team at Joni and Friends, what is missing from the bills is just as important as what is actually in them. Noticeably absent, they point out, is a conscience clause. Joni Eareckson Tada who is the Founder and CEO of Joni and Friends and a signatory of the recently announced “Manhattan Declaration,” fears that the elimination of conscience clauses, as mentioned in that declaration as a threat to religious freedom, would compel pro-life institutions and health care professionals to refer or possibly participate in abortions or other medical decisions that would not sustain life.

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“It is for these reasons that I added my name to the declaration,” Tada said. “I concur wholeheartedly with its language, ‘we are especially troubled that in our nation today the lives of the unborn, the disabled and the elderly are severely threatened,’ and ‘the rights of conscience could be jeopardized by those who would use the instruments of coercion to compel persons of faith to compromise their deepest convictions.’”

“The idea that a physician might be required – because of a new health care bill – to perform an action so detrimental and with such far-reaching consequences, goes against the very foundation of medical care and ethics,” Tada said. “Neither does the bill make any mention of provider integrity. What good is government-provided or funded health care if a patient can’t trust his or her physician to be a good doctor and to have his or her best interests at heart?”

Having served as advocates for those with disabilities for more than 30 years now, Tada and other JAF leadership have long understood the impending threats to a culture of life. They have seen the ramifications of one life being deemed more valuable than another and have watched in horror the rising number of infants being aborted because they were likely to be “less than perfect.” JAF has also engaged in the discussion on stem cell research, encouraging the more successful forms of research rather than that which destroys embryos. JAF serves as a resource for others to be informed on these topics and prepared to speak out for the value of life.

In addition to the CID, JAF serves the disability community through the International Disability Center, offering a wide array of life-affirming ministries to people with disabilities around the world, including international radio and television programs filled with inspirational stories. Wheels for the World helps thousands of individuals receive wheelchairs and the life-giving message of the Gospel. Every year families affected by disability learn that they are not alone when they attend Family Retreats across the U.S. and now around the world.

– 30 –

**Note to Editors: For more information about the Joni and Friends Christian Institute on Disability or to arrange an interview with or Joni Eareckson Tada or CID representatives, please contact Melany Ethridge of A. Larry Ross Communications at 972.267.1111 or [melany@alarryross.com](mailto:melany@alarryross.com).**