

Written Testimony of Marie Reigstad, Public Policy Manager at Catholic Charities of St. Paul and Minneapolis, for House HHS Hearing on Permanent Reductions to Emergency Medical Assistance, January 31, 2012

Catholic Charities serves around 37,000 people each year, and we have a variety of medical services. We know that some of our clients have lost healthcare because of the permanent reduction to EMA.

DHS' interpretation of the law states that any service, the removal of which will result in an emergency situation within 48 hours, will still be covered by EMA. This does NOT cover chemotherapy, dialysis, dental care, prescription drugs, mental health services, or other life-saving medical care that will not result in an emergency situation within 48 hours.

Yes, we need a process to keep society from paying for extraordinary medical care costs. Chemotherapy for an otherwise healthy cancer patient is NOT extraordinary. Dialysis is not extraordinary. Prescription drugs are not extraordinary.

The level of healthcare a person receives should not depend on where he or his parents work; whether he has a pre-existing condition, how much money he has, where he lives, or when he got here.

The services mentioned above -- chemotherapy, prescription drugs, dialysis, mental health care and others -- often make the difference between life and death. To honor the sanctity and dignity of life, we must restore the reductions to EMA.

Thank you.