Why the CHCLA Public Policy Institute is So Important
By Grace-Marie Turner

President Steve White and Vice President for Policy Louis Brown were warmly received this Spring when they met with key congressional leaders and staff on Capitol Hill to introduce the Catholic Health Care Leadership Alliance and its mission to educate society on the values of Catholic health care.

Many of these legislators have voted for and even sponsored legislation protecting life, religious freedom, and conscience rights, and they were pleased to learn of a new organization to amplify the voices of Catholic health care leaders in advocating for these vital goals.

But that is only the beginning of the work ahead. Policymakers also look to organization like the CHCLA to recommend policy initiatives to advance patient-centered health care and also to provide early warnings about brewing threats.

Members of Congress need to address hundreds of different issues, and Members and staff told Dr. White and Mr. Brown that they welcomed their advice on policy recommendations.

The role and mission of the CHCLA's Institute for Public Policy and Advocacy, directed by Louis Brown, is to build coalitions, advocate for faith based protections, and educate society on the value of Catholic health care. The Institute is being officially launched November 8 during a news conference near the Capitol. A symposium will be held the following day on "The Advancement of Catholic Health Care" at Catholic University's Columbus School of Law.

The symposium will feature leading speakers emphasizing the mission of the CHCLA, with panels of top health policy experts offering specific ideas about reforming Medicare, Medicaid, and other health programs to put doctors and patients, not bureaucracies, at the center of the U.S. health sector.

It has become far too apparent that more government spending is not the answer to problems in the health sector. From government efforts to force the Little Sisters of the Poor to provide contraceptive coverage to their employees, to government mandates that would force doctors and nurses to perform procedures in violation of their faith and conscience, Catholic professionals have had too little ability to have their voices heard.

Washington listens more closely to a chorus of voices than to individuals. The Catholic Health Care Leadership Alliance creates a larger voice in the national dialogue, including policy discussions in Washington and in the states, to support the rights of patients and professionals in health care to be able to express their faith through their works and to prioritize care for the most vulnerable.

Some examples of recommendations from the CHCLA Policy Institute:

- The CHCLA believes that the vulnerable will be best served if public programs provide a strong safety net in conjunction with a vibrant, innovative health care system based on the inherent dignity of every human person as a child of God.

- For too long, faithful and hardworking men and women in the health care professions have labored to care for patients under a cloud of outside interference and directives. The CHCLA will oppose any federal and state laws that coerce doctors to violate their beliefs and preform medical procedures that are contrary to their medical judgment, from abortion to surgeries and drugs designed to change a patient's innate gender.

- The CHCLA will support policy changes that respect subsidiarity and solidarity to create a better climate for charity care. They advocate for policy initiatives that allow individuals more control over the resources, including any government subsidies to support their care and coverage, to empower individuals and families to control decisions about the health care and health coverage that work best for them.