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For immediate release

**PEORIA** – Samaritan Ministries is praying and urges all Christians to pray for the family of U.S. Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., who died Tuesday night.

Sen. Kennedy passed away at age 77 after a lengthy battle with cancer.

“We certainly want to extend our condolences to the Kennedy family and the senator’s friends,” said James Lansberry on Wednesday.

Lansberry is vice president of Samaritan Ministries, a health care sharing organization with 13,500 members.

“The loss of a loved one, especially to a debilitating illness, is always a tragedy,” he said.

In the wake of Sen. Kennedy’s death, however, it’s important that the vigorous debate on health care continue, Lansberry said, and that decisions made be based on the solid analysis of facts and not be a purely emotional response.

The Massachusetts legislator was co-author of the health care bill under consideration in the Senate.

“Hastily enacting health care legislation simply because of our grief will not serve the interests of our country or be truly honoring to Senator Kennedy,” Lansberry said. “What happens with this legislation is too important to be subject to sentiment. Any action taken on health care reform will have an impact on the United States for years to come.”

Samaritan Ministries is concerned about the impact of health care reform on the freedom of its members to share the costs of medical needs. Samaritan, based in Peoria, is a member of the Alliance of Health Care Sharing Ministries, of which Lansberry is president.

Samaritan was founded in 1994. It includes more than 13,500 member households around the world. For more information about SMI or to contact James Lansberry, call 1-888-268-4377.

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