

To: E-OHPSCA2713.EBSA
Subject: religious organizations exempt from contraceptive provisions
Date: Wednesday, August 10, 2011 6:48:40 PM

I join with the American Association of University Women (AAUW) in asking you to accept the recommendations of the Institute of Medicine as pertain to coverage of preventive care under the new health care law, and to reject any exemptions for "religious employers." These preventive services are a critical element of the new law and would provide countless women better access to necessary health care.

While AAUW believes that "religious refusal" exemptions unjustly deny women access to contraceptive services, others, driven by an ideological distaste for all contraceptive services, are pushing the government to make exemptions even larger. Indeed, some groups are pushing for the exemption to apply to religiously-run health providers, so hospitals with religious affiliations would be exempt from the coverage requirement, even though they employ people of all faiths and ideologies. If granted, this larger exemption would deny access to thousands of women just because of where they work.

I urge you to ensure women have access to quality preventive care by accepting IOM's recommendations and rejecting the proposed religious refusal exemption provisions.

On a personal note--my sister's husband works for a Catholic hospital, and she wanted the Norplant (?), the tubes in your arm that last 5 years. This item was not covered by the hospital, but she didn't have to pay out of pocket for her birth control--she got her birth control and it was billed as something else. Women can and should be able to make contraceptive choices for themselves, regardless of their employers and health care plans. There are many Catholic women on birth control. The Church doesn't like it, but I don't see them paying the women they employ and provide health care for by the number of children they have. We won't give you birth control, you can't afford it, but if you have 12 children, we will pay you x dollars in extra salary or stipend for every child you have. I don't see this happening. As a society, we either need to allow women to access birth control freely, or give them substantial financial support so that they can raise the children they are forced to have, since abortion is becoming harder to access. Women are more than wombs.