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**To:** [E-OHPSCA2713.EBSA](#)  
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Access to family planning methods such as birth control SHOULD be free and widely available. As a minimum it should part of any health insurance coverage and not be subject to OPTIONAL fulfillment on religious grounds.

Health and religion have no connection. One's religious views should remain private and not be imposed on others. Health institutions that are founded by religious organizations but provide public services must adhere to federal law or be subject to penalties for not adhering to the United States Constitution.

Private citizens who work in the health industry must provide services that are legal to citizens who ask for those services. Employers who provide health coverage must allow their employees access to health services that are safe and legal.

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.

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