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To: [E-OHPSCA2713.EBSA](#)
Subject: contraception & preventative care coverage
Date: Tuesday, August 16, 2011 8:01:34 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 myself worked for a "religious employer" who did not cover birth control. Fortunately, I was financially secure enough to afford the \$70/month price of my birth control of choice. Although my institution was "religious", many of my coworkers were not, and they were restricted to the use of condoms or buying their own birth control, many of whom could not afford it. Others claimed extreme menstrual cramping, heavy bleeding and uncontrollable acne in order to obtain a prescription for birth control that would be considered medically necessary, and thus covered by insurance. An institution should not have the right to restrict the reproductive choice of their female employees. If men employed through this same institution were to request Viagra or Cialis from their healthcare providers, it would be covered in full. I consider this blatant discrimination; men are provided with everything they need to maintain a full and active sex life, while women are made to pay. Furthermore, from a financial perspective, it is cost effective to provide insurance coverage for birth control. One year of a higher tiered prescription birth control, such as the Nuva Ring, costs approximately \$850; low tiered birth control, such as the pill, would cost even less. One year of coverage of the prenatal care, delivery, and newborn infant care (checkups, vaccines, treatment for possible illness) would cost exponentially more. Delivery alone can cost as much as \$20,000. If there are any complications in the birth of the child, necessitating a stay in the NICU, the cost will only increase from there, to as much if not more than \$250,000. Not only is "religious exemption" unfair, discriminatory and antiquated, it is fiscally irresponsible. 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.

"y todo vive para que yo viva:
sin ir tan lejos puedo verlo todo:
veo en tu vida todo lo viviente."
~Pablo Neruda~
Sonnet VII