

From: [Elizabeth Durack](#)
To: [E-OHPSCA2713.EBSA](#)
Subject: Please let me practice my religion freely
Date: Tuesday, August 30, 2011 8:46:32 PM

Thank you for taking into account my comments in regards to "**Interim Final Rules for Group Health Plans and Health Insurance Issuers Relating to Coverage of Preventive Services under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act**".

I am a 33 year old Catholic lay woman, member of the Society of St Vincent de Paul and supporter of Catholic Charities, Catholic Relief Services, am a part of the Catholic Diocese of Madison, WI and other organizations which may be affected by this HHS rule to require employee insurance coverage for contraceptives, elective sterilization, and related counseling. I am an ordinary churchgoing Catholic, and not a leader or official representative of any organization. Contraceptives and sterilization are entirely against my religious and moral beliefs, and I intensely oppose any organizations or even businesses being forced against their conscience to pay for them.

Any direction I look, at those I am close to, at our society, and at my own personal life, the evidence shows me that contraception has been a powerful force for the breakdown of marriage, family life, and moral order, a radical social experiment my parents' and grandparents' generation embarked on, that seemed to promise so much and solve so many problems, but that actually has had devastating human consequences. Catholic morality obviously fosters the integrity of married family life which is so good for children and for society. I believe that men and women are made in the image of God and have innate dignity, and that human sexuality has a dignity, purpose and meaning that is from God and through which people can become co-creators of new life with Him. Fertility is no disease, but healthy and good! I say as a woman, providing insurance coverage for contraception or sterilization is not necessary to women's health, but seems to be a matter of lifestyle choice or social engineering.

Adherence to the universal and perennial Catholic moral teaching against contraception and sterilization is profoundly integral to the practice of the Catholic religion, and not only is it wrong for us to use them but also wrong to pay for others to do so, because we consider that the objective immorality of these things is knowable through the natural moral law. This proposed rule is absolutely against the free practice of our Catholic Faith.

Please provide conscience protections so that no organization, especially no religious organization, must pay for insurance for contraceptives, sterilization, or counseling to use them, against its beliefs. The conscience clause must not be limited to organizations that employ and serve only or primarily members of their own religion. Requiring Catholic organizations to employ only Catholics could run us afoul of federal and state antidiscrimination laws. And as others have stated, we serve others because we are Catholic, not because they are. I know that in the Society of St Vincent de Paul, the members of the Society (who are a huge volunteer corps and organizational leadership) are overwhelmingly Catholic but the employees are more diverse in religious affiliation. And the people we serve are an entirely diverse group of the poor of our city, whom we serve for love, and not because they share our religion. The practice of our Catholic religion calls for that.

It would be extremely painful if Catholic organizations that do so much good, through which we care for people in need, are forced to close. As a young adult woman, it's so frustrating and even insulting to me to think that some government agency thinks I want or need birth control or sterilization more than I want and need the free practice of my Catholic faith, personally and through the organizations I am a part of. Dear HHS, please give us conscience protections!

Peace and thanks to you for reading my comments.