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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

Comment On: EBSA-2010-0018-0002

Group Health Plans and Health Insurance Issuers Relating to Coverage of Preventive Services under Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act: Amendment

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Comment on FR Doc # 2011-19684

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General Comment

I am concerned about this proposed amendment which exempts some religious institutions from providing coverage for contraception as preventive care. This exemption is troubling because it is based on a serious misreading of the freedom of religion I hold dear.

Some groups have misinterpreted what should be an individual choice into what they have termed "an unprecedented attack on religious liberty." I urge HHS to carefully consider the motivations of those who oppose this guideline in conjunction with your motivations, which would appear to be to enhance the public good.

The US tax code instructs the IRS to treat certain not-for-profit organizations such as hospitals, charities and social service organizations as "special" because they further the public good instead of just benefitting "private interests."

The HHS decision to include full coverage for contraception and counseling is the result of sound judgment about what is good for all society. Allowing certain faith-based organizations to avoid this statute is promoting the private interests of one religion over the consciences of employees. This does not further their special mission to help the common good.

The inclusion of family planning as preventive health care requires no one to use it or to endorse it. This guideline involves no restriction on anybody's freedom, religious or otherwise.

Religious freedom protections extend to one's personal religious beliefs and practices, but they do not give license to obstruct or coerce the exercise of another's conscience. For that reason, I believe that these refusal clauses are far too broad to be equitable, restricting both the professional and the patient.

Please listen to the majority of Americans who believe choices related to contraception should not be dictated by employers. I urge you to revoke this exemption and protect the freedoms of all those who would seek access to important healthcare services, regardless of where they work.