

The Honorable Kathleen Sebelius
Secretary
Department of Health and Human Services
Hubert H Humphrey Building
200 Independence Avenue, S. W.
Washington, DC 20201

September 30, 2011

Submitted electronically via Regulations.gov

Re: Comments on File Code CMS-9992-IFC2, Interim Rule on Religious Exemption from required Coverage of Preventative Services

Dear Secretary Sebelius:

The proposed interim rule is defined way too narrowly and is a clear prohibition on the practice of conscience and religious faith in the US. It would mean that many religious organizations, Christian or otherwise, who do not support abortion or contraception, would be forced to pay for such services in their healthcare plans or not to cover the healthcare needs of their employees.

The proposed exemption, among other restrictions, only applies to organizations who in effect “preach to the choir” (proselytize to their own). It does not cover religious organizations that provide services to the poor or universities or other institutions who provide a broad range of education or services and whose prime focus, in consequence, is not evangelization. In addition, to meet the exemption in relation to mainly employing those of their own beliefs, many organizations would have to skirt labor laws on non-discrimination.

Many religious organizations object to abortion or contraceptives that induce abortions. Indeed many, if not most, Americans object to abortion, depending on which poll one reads. Why would the Government want to force such organizations, of whatever persuasion, out of the business of providing services to others? This seems like a mandating of atheism in the provision of services to others or at least the use of force to compel institutions that care for others to fall in line with the prevailing morality (or lack thereof) of the current Administration or Congress. Where has the “land of the free” gone?

I consider the current plans to be unconstitutional and immoral. Please amend them substantially to freely allow the exercise of conscience and practice of religion.

Thank you.

John E. Kennedy
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