Archdiocese of Newark
OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

September 28, 2011

The Honorable
Kathleen Sebelius
Secretary
US Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Madam Secretary:

I write to you today to express my opposition to the guidelines issued by your Department's Health Resources and Services Administration that require almost all private health plans to cover abortions, contraception and sterilization as "preventive services" for women under the 2010 Patience Protection and Affordable Care Act. I also write in opposition to the very narrow and inadequate religious exemption defined by HHS for this legislation. These actions pose an unprecedented threat to the religious freedom of individuals and institutions; therefore, they must not be implemented.

Pregnancy is not a disease, and abortions to end a pregnancy, and drugs and surgeries to prevent pregnancy are not basic health care that the government should require all Americans to purchase or provide coverage for under health insurance plans. Please remove abortions, sterilization and prescription contraceptives from the list of "preventive services" the federal government is mandating in private health plans. It is especially important to exclude any drug that may cause an early abortion, and to fully respect religious freedom as other federal laws do.

The narrow religious exemption in HHS's new rule protects almost no one. Under the narrow exemption that your Department is proposing, the many Church and Church-sponsored organizations in this nation that serve the general public such as colleges and universities, hospitals, and charitable institutions – organizations that, do, indeed, share and espouse the religious tenets of the Church -- would be forced to undertake programs and practices that conflict with our beliefs, religious convictions, and our moral teaching.

Archdiocesan Center
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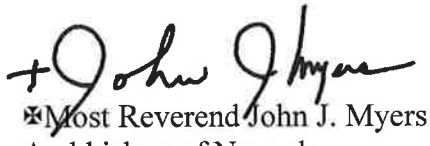
No other federal law or order has entertained such a complete disregard for or prohibition to the freedom of any faith group to practice its teachings. I urge you to rescind these restrictions and guidelines, and thus allow all organizations and individuals to offer, sponsor and obtain health coverage that does not violate their moral and religious convictions.

With kindest personal regards, I am

Sincerely,



✠Most Reverend John J. Myers
Archbishop of Newark

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c: Honorable Chris Christie
Honorable Frank Lautenberg
Honorable Robert Menendez
Honorable Robert E. Andrews
Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen
Honorable Scott Garrett
Honorable Rush Holt
Honorable Leonard Lance
Honorable Frank LoBiondo
Honorable Frank Pallone
Honorable Bill Pascrell Jr.
Honorable Donald Payne
Honorable Jon Runyan
Honorable Chris Smith
Honorable Steve Rothman
Honorable Albio Sires