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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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General Comment

I am writing in support of Amendment EBSA-2010-0018-0002, which provides a greater degree of religious and healthcare freedom to individuals.

The Center for Inquiry was ever more eloquent and articulate than I could hope to be in their letter to HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius. I hereafter quote the portion of that letter with which I most strongly agree and support.

"The HHS decision to include full coverage for contraception services and counseling as preventive services is the result of sound judgment about what is good for all society. Allowing certain faith-based organizations to avoid this statute is, in fact, promoting the private interests of one religion—or even one conservative element of that religion—over the consciences of employees. This does not further their special mission to help the common good. Ironically, when the bishops claim to lobby for religious freedom, they are ignoring the moral agency of all the women who would benefit from contraceptive coverage. In addition, they are skirting the fact that few Catholics agree with them about the provision and use of family planning.

The inclusion of family planning as preventive health care requires no one to use it or to endorse it.

Nor does it infer that its use is or is not morally legitimate. This guideline involves no restriction on

anybody's
freedom, religious or otherwise. Indeed, it could be argued that it allows greater freedom.
Religious freedom is an expansive rather than restrictive idea. It is not about telling people what they
can
and cannot believe or practice, but rather giving people the space to follow their own conscience in
what
they believe or practice. The 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, we
believe
that institution-encompassing refusal clauses are far too broad to be equitable... ."