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To: [E-OHPSCA2713.EBSA](#)
Subject: Religious exemption
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The first amendment to the U. S. Constitution says, "CONGRESS SHALL make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

It seems to me that creating a law allowing a religious refusal to deny contraceptive services to women would be in violation of this amendment.

I urge you to accept the recommendations of the Institute of Medicine as pertain to coverage of preventive care under the new health care law, and to reject any exemptions for "religious employers." These preventive services are a critical element of the new law and would provide countless women better access to necessary health care.

"Religious refusal" exemptions unjustly deny women access to contraceptive services. A larger problem is that those driven by an ideological distaste for all contraceptive services are pushing the government to make exemptions even larger. Indeed, some groups are pushing for the exemption to apply to religiously-run health providers, so hospitals with religious affiliations would be exempt from the coverage requirement, even though they employ people of all faiths and ideologies. If granted, this larger exemption would deny access to thousands of women just because of where they work.

I urge you to ensure women have access to quality preventive care by accepting IOM's recommendations and rejecting the proposed religious refusal exemption provisions.