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**To:** [E-OHPSCA2713.EBSA](#)  
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**Subject:** HHS and religious exemption  
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Dear HHS:

What can you be thinking? In this day and age when abortion is such a controversy, why would you limit access to contraception to women who want to avoid an unwanted pregnancy? Denying a woman contraception because her employer decides to dictate his/her religious beliefs onto employees is totally against what this country stands for. With unemployment so high a woman cannot just switch jobs and work for a more enlightened employer. And, the same holds for men who work for religious institutions, whose wives would be subjected to this convoluted requirement. Additionally, an extra mouth to feed when there is not enough money to support the children one already has would be a heavy burden placed on many families.

At a time when conservatives want less government interference in the lives of Americans, it seems highly hypocritical for them to advocate such a rule be adopted by HHS. HHS must be true to its mandate of providing "services" to the people of the USA. Do so by allowing women access to contraception no matter who they work for. Do NOT create second class citizens by passing this exemption to preventive care under the new health care law.

I join with the American Association of University Women (AAUW) in asking 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.

While AAUW believes that "religious refusal" exemptions unjustly deny women access to contraceptive services, others, 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.

This wonderful country was founded on the separation of church and state. A few religious fanatics cannot hold the women of the USA hostage. Otherwise, what is the point of fighting the Taliban overseas when our own government allows religious fanatics to subjugate the women of America?

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.