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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 oppose the illegally narrow religious exemption created in the Interim Final Rule. This proposed religious exemption would apply almost exclusively only to houses of worship, and possibly some denominational seminaries. The religious exemption should be broadened.

As a result of the HRSA guidelines, employers who have a pro-life, religious, or other conscientious objection to facilitating the use of birth control drugs or abortion-inducing drugs are now required to pay for the very drugs that they believe result in the death of a human being. According to the dictates of their conscience, this would be murder and sinful.

They will either violate their religious and conscientious objections, or drop their health insurance coverage for their employees, leading to a great hardship for millions of employees and their families around the nation.

I urge HHS to adopt a robust religious exemption that will allow all employers who have religious and conscientious objections to providing birth control drugs or abortion-inducing drugs to their employees to opt out of the new HRSA guidelines. This religious exemption should also specifically exempt all religious organizations under section 501(c) of the IRS code.

If HHS adopts these common sense suggestions for a new religious exemption, it will demonstrate that the Department and the Obama Administration want to protect the religious freedom of all employers in the United States.