

# PUBLIC SUBMISSION

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**Docket:** EBSA-2010-0018

Interim Final Rules for Group Health Plans and Health Insurance Issuers Relating to Coverage of Preventive Services Under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act

**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 vigorously oppose the illegally narrow religious exemption created in the Interim Final Rule. I believe that the religious exemption should be broadened. Under the guidelines released on August 1, 2011 by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), most health insurance plans in the United States - including those offered by private employers - must provide full access to birth control drugs, as well as abortion-inducing drugs. 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 provide 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. Birth control drugs and abortion-inducing such as "Ella" and "the morning after pill" are commercially available. Women who desire to use them can easily obtain these drugs. I, a US Citizen, am not suggesting trampling the rights of other US citizens who would want to obtain or use these drugs by making it illegal to do so. However, now that employers will be required to pay for these drugs, the religious and conscientious rights of employers are being trampled by these guidelines and the narrow religious exemption. When Congress passed the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act and President Obama signed the bill into law, the intent was to ensure that all Americans have health coverage, not to force religious employers into a Hobson's choice between violating their religious convictions or ending their insurance plans for their employees and face fines. In keeping with this intent, we urge HHS to adopt a robust religious exemption that will allow all employers who have religious and conscientious objections to opt out. This will demonstrate that the Department and the Obama Administration want to protect the religious freedom of ALL citizens in the United States.