



St. Francis
HOSPITAL
LITCHFIELD, ILLINOIS

September 27, 2011

The Honorable Kathleen Sebelius
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Sebelius:

On behalf of St. Francis Hospital in Litchfield, Illinois, I am writing to express our opposition to the Interim Final Rules on Preventive Services issued by your department on August 3, 2011 that would mandate that all private health care plans cover prescription contraceptives approved by the FDA and surgical sterilizations. We also urge you to broaden the proposed definition of “religious employer” to ensure conscience protections that will allow us to continue our health ministry as Catholic employers.

St. Francis Hospital, like other Catholic health care providers, cares for persons of **all** ages, races and religions, in a manner consistent with our religious and moral convictions. These convictions are the source of both the work we do and the limits on what we will do. Our ethical standards in health care are based our commitment to upholding the dignity of the human person and the sanctity of human life from conception to natural death.

The Interim Rules in effect put Catholic health care providers in the untenable position of having to either ignore our Ethical and Religious Directives or discontinue our healing ministries. Until now, our nation’s foundational commitment to protecting the free-exercise of religion has ensured conscience exemptions from mandates concerning abortion, contraception and sterilization. Unfortunately, the Interim Rules, as written, ignore individual religious conscience and define public ministries of the Church as not “religious enough” for an exemption.

For these reasons, we ask that the regulation be revoked. If not, we urge modification to embrace and defend the public ministry of religious institutions.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Daniel Perryman
President and CEO

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*An Affiliate of
Hospital Sisters
Health System*