

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

March 22, 2011

Secretary Sebelius,

We write to you today as medical students and medical professionals concerned by your Department's February announcement that it is rescinding of most of the Bush Administration's conscience protections. As future medical professionals, we feel that your decision must be reconsidered for the future of the medical profession.

Without the protection of the full conscience clause outlined by the Bush Administration, healthcare access for hundreds of thousands of patients nationwide will be threatened and healthcare costs will rise because of the lack of facilities to provide needed services.

Each year, one in six patients is cared for in a Catholic hospital.¹ It is well known that these hospitals will not perform abortions. Without conscience protections, these institutions, which provide services to millions of patients, may shut down rather than be forced to perform surgical or medical abortions.

While the Department of Health and Human Services did not rescind the conscience protections for abortions, the Department did rescind the protection for medical professionals in prescribing and dispensing proven abortion-causing drugs such as *ella* and Plan B and in performing in vitro fertilization, among other dangerous women's health procedures.

Driving faith-based and conscience minded professionals out of medicine would strand hundreds of thousands of patients, especially those in rural vicinities who rely on only a few doctors in their communities. Healthcare costs will rise because of the lack of doctors and medical facilities.

In a 2009 poll by the Christian Medical Association, 20% of medical students reported that they are "not pursuing a career in Obstetrics or Gynecology" because of perceived discrimination and coercion in their field. This is a serious problem.

Without future faith-based medical professionals and medical facilities, millions of Americans will not be able to receive the quality medical care they need. It is critical that medical professionals continue to have proper protections in order to serve women across the country.

¹ <http://freedom2care.org>

Eighty-seven percent of Americans believe that it is important to “make sure that healthcare professionals in America are not forced to participate in procedures and practices to which they have moral objections.”² Therefore, we ask that you reconsider the Department’s recent decision and uphold the conscience protections set forth by the Bush Administration in 2008.

We hope to meet with you soon regarding this matter, and will follow-up with your office in the coming days requesting a formal meeting.

Thank you for your consideration,

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² Freedom2care.org