



**Office of
The Archbishop**

100 East Eighth Street
Cincinnati, Ohio 45202
513-421-3131

February 13, 2012

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Despite the so-called “accommodation” announced by President Obama on Friday, the mandates from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services regarding insurance coverage for abortion-inducing drugs, sterilization, and contraception still do not adequately and clearly protect the freedom of conscience of employers and their employees. Although the announcement claims now to exempt religious employers by placing the onus of coverage for these services on insurers, many of the details remain unsettlingly murky. For instance, many religious organizations – including the Archdiocese of Cincinnati and its agencies – are self-insured, which apparently means that they would still have to pay for services they find immoral. Secondly, it is unclear how insurers can be forced to cover these services for “free” while not passing on the cost to the insured. This could still violate the conscience rights of many employees who do not want to be forced to provide objectionable services for others, such as through their premium payments.

The Catholic Church, along with many other religious leaders, is reiterating its firm position that the freedom to follow one’s conscience and to have access to health care are both fundamental human rights. We will not be forced into a position of choosing between the two. We are open to conversation and dialogue with the Administration to find solutions. However, one course of action which would provide a permanent resolution would be the passage the Respect for Rights of Conscience Act (HR 1179 and S 1467). We renew our call for people of faith to stand up for religious liberty and urge Congress to pass this comprehensive legislation.

CALL TO ACTION: Contact your U.S. Representative and Senators by e-mail, phone, or FAX letter:

- Call the U.S. Capitol Switchboard at (202) 224-3121, or call your Members’ local offices.
- Send your email to Congress through www.usccb.org/conscience.
- Additional contact information can be found on Members’ web sites at www.house.gov and www.senate.gov.

MESSAGE: “Please co-sponsor the Respect for Rights of Conscience Act (H.R. 1179, S. 1467) and help enact it into law. The Obama Administration’s decision to require even religious institutions to provide coverage of sterilization and contraceptives, including drugs that can cause an abortion, makes passage of this measure especially urgent. Please ensure that the rights of conscience of all participants in our nation’s health care system are respected.”

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dennis M. Schnurr". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend Dennis M. Schnurr
Archbishop of Cincinnati