



OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

## ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON

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Dear Brother Priests,

We have all heard much over the past few years about the cause of reforming health care in the United States. Until now, federal law has never prevented Catholic institutions like the Archdiocese of Washington from providing for the needs of their employees with a health plan that is consistent with Catholic moral teachings. However, the Department of Health and Human Services is currently considering adopting regulations that would threaten that freedom.

Under the proposed HHS regulations, virtually all Catholic hospitals, elementary and secondary schools, colleges and universities, and charitable organizations would be required to provide coverage for sterilization procedures and contraception, including drugs that may induce abortions, unless they stop hiring and stop serving non-Catholics. The regulations would place many Catholic employers in the untenable position of having to choose between violating the law and violating their conscience.

This is an issue of fundamental, national importance. Yesterday's *Washington Post* and *New York Times* ran a [letter](#) published by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and signed by over four hundred prominent Catholic leaders calling on Congress to reconsider this unprecedented assault on religious liberty.

Given the importance of this matter, I encourage you to visit the [USCCB website](#) and also to invite others to do the same. No freedom is more precious and deserving of vigilance than our freedom of conscience.

With every personal good wish, I am

Faithfully in Christ,

Archbishop of Washington