

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 7, 2012

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

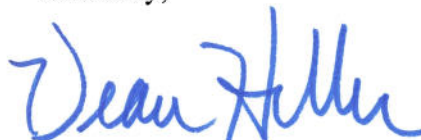
Dear Secretary Sebelius,

I write to express my serious concern with the rule released by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) last week, mandating that religious-affiliated charities, schools, and hospitals provide coverage for controversial contraceptive products. While most Americans support access to commonly-used birth control, which are covered by the majority of existing health plans, some contraceptive and abortifacient drugs pose serious moral concerns for Americans from many faiths. The overly narrow exception for faith-based organizations excludes many groups, including charities, schools, and hospitals, that would be forced to provide coverage of contraceptive and abortifacient products despite strong objections to these drugs rooted in deeply-held religious beliefs.

The federal government does not have the right to tell religious groups to provide a service that violates their faith. Just last month, a U.S. Supreme Court ruling upheld the independence of religious organizations from government interference in their relations with employees. As currently written, this mandate will surely result in litigation that could be avoided if HHS issued a regulation that showed greater respect for religious freedom.

HHS' broad contraceptive mandate brings to light one of the numerous concerns Americans have had with the healthcare law. Forcing Americans to offer and purchase healthcare plans created by bureaucrats through burdensome and morally dubious regulations stands against more than 200 years of our nation's proud history of religious and individual liberty. HHS has no right to say that one's faith cannot inform their healthcare decisions. In this light, I urge your agency to rescind this rule and ensure that any future issuance of a revised rule respects the conscience of not only medical providers, but healthcare consumers and faith-based organizations as well.

Sincerely,



DEAN HELLER
U.S. Senator