

June 24, 2004

The Honorable Ralph Regula  
Chairman  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services and Education  
2358 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Regula,

We are writing to urge you to include Conscience Protection language in the Hyde Amendment in the Labor/HHS/Education Appropriation bill.

The Hyde Amendment, which prohibits federal abortion funding, urgently needs to be expanded to counteract a nationwide effort to attack the conscience rights of religious and other health care providers. In one example cited at a House hearing in July 2002, an Alaska court forced a community hospital to provide elective late-term abortions contrary to its policy and the sentiment of the community. In New Jersey, abortion advocacy groups even urged the state of New Jersey to require a Catholic health system to build an abortion clinic on its premises, to serve what they see as a right of "access" to abortion (see "ACLU asks release of \$1.5 million," *Burlington County Times*, July 9, 2002). And just last month, the State of New Mexico refused to approve a hospital lease because the community-owned hospital (following the same policy as most hospitals in the United States) declined to perform elective abortions.

The Conscience Protection language will protect these hospitals and other institutional and individual health care providers from governmental discrimination when they decline to provide, pay for, or refer for abortions.

Such protection has the support of the House and is an appropriate addition to the Hyde Amendment. In fact, the Alaska court partly premised its decision on the fact that the hospital received federal funds (Medicare and Medicaid)—transforming it, in the court's view, into a "quasi-public" actor. Abortion advocacy groups are now maintaining that receipt of federal funds requires conscientiously opposed health care providers to perform abortions.

We hope you will agree, as we do, with what was said by a board member of the Alaska hospital mentioned above: Hospitals and other health care providers have "a right to choose *not* to be involved in destroying life." Please honor Congressman Hyde's request to add Conscience Protection language to his Hyde Amendment.

Sincerely,

Rev. Michael D. Place, STD  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
Catholic Health Association

Gail Quinn  
Executive Director  
US Conference of Catholic Bishops' Secretariat for Pro-Life  
Activities

National Right to Life Committee

Samuel B. Casey  
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Christian Legal Society

Connie Mackie  
Vice President of Government Affairs  
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Barrett Duke  
Vice President for Public Policy and Research  
The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission  
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William J. Cox  
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Debbie Vinnedge  
Executive Director  
Children of God for Life

cc: Speaker of the House  
House Majority Leader  
House Majority Whip

Rev. Thomas J. Euteneuer President/CEO  
Human Life International

Judie Brown  
President  
American Life League, Inc.

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