



A Passionate Voice for Compassionate Care

October 25, 2011

The Honorable Bob Casey
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Casey:

I am writing on behalf of the Catholic Health Association of the United States (CHA) in support of your legislation, *The Health Care Provider and Hospital Conscience Protection Act (S. 1489)*, which would permanently codify protections for individual and institutional health care providers' conscience rights.

CHA is the national leadership organization of the Catholic health ministry, representing the largest not-for-profit provider of health care services in the nation:

- CHA includes more than 2,000 Catholic health care sponsors, systems, hospitals, long-term care facilities, and related organizations;
- 1 in 6 patients in the United States are cared for in a Catholic hospital each year;
- All 50 states and the District of Columbia are served by Catholic health care organizations providing acute care, skilled nursing, and other services including hospice, home health, assisted living and senior housing;
- Approximately 725,000 individuals are employed in Catholic hospitals.

The Catholic health ministry in the United States traces its history to 1727 when French Ursuline sisters arrived in New Orleans to serve the city's sick and poor and to educate its children. Today, as in 1727, the Catholic health care ministry welcomes and serves persons of all ages, races and religious faiths. Our deeply held religious and moral convictions are the source of both the work we do and the limits on what we will do.

CHA has long supported, and Congress has enacted annually since 2004, provider conscience protections known as the "Weldon Amendment." The "Weldon Amendment" protects providers from discrimination on the basis that the provider does not provide, pay for, provide coverage of, or refer for abortions. We view this existing legal protection as essential for the continuation of both our own ministry and our nation's commitment to freedom of religion and of conscience. We believe it should be codified permanently into law rather than being annually renewed through a rider on the Labor-HHS Appropriations legislation. Your legislation would do this as well as provide additional remedies for violations of provider conscience protections.



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We applaud your efforts in support of those who uphold and respect the sanctity of life, and look forward to working with you in support of this legislation. Please feel free to contact me or any member of CHA's advocacy staff if you have any questions or if we may be of any further service on this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sr. Carol Keehan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sr. Carol Keehan, DC
President and CEO