



*We Will Empower Bold Change to Elevate
Human Flourishing.*

ETHICAL INTEGRITY AND CONSCIENCE PROTECTIONS

THE ISSUE

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. The explicit recognition of the right of Catholic organizations to perform their ministries in fidelity to their faith is almost as old as our nation itself. President Thomas Jefferson reassured the Ursuline nuns by letter on May 15, 1804, "that your institution will be permitted to govern itself according to it's [sic] own voluntary rules, without interference from the civil authority, whatever diversity of shade may appear in the religious opinions of our fellow citizens, the charitable objects of your institution cannot be indifferent to any; and it's [sic] furtherance of the wholesome purposes of society...cannot fail to ensure it the patronage of the government it is under. be [sic] assured it will meet all the protection which my office can give it."

As a Catholic health ministry, our mission and ethical standards in health care are rooted in and inseparable from the Catholic Church's teachings about the dignity of each and every human person, created in the image of God. Access to health care is essential to promote and protect the inherent and inalienable worth and dignity of every individual. These values form the basis for our steadfast commitment to the compelling moral implications of our health care ministry and for CHA's long history of insisting on and working for the right of everyone to affordable, accessible health care. Today, as in 1727, our members are committed to the provision of quality health care services to any person in need of care, no matter who they are, without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability, or any other category, including gender identity, sexual orientation, financial means or immigration status.

The historic role of the Catholic health care provider to serve the common good in a manner consistent with its institutional conscience is often challenged. Catholic providers have increasingly been criticized for not offering what some label a "full range of health services" (e.g., abortion, sterilization, contraception). CHA and our members have opposed adversarial legislation and lawsuits to force Catholic health care providers to offer services that conflict with Catholic moral teaching. Catholic health care facilities and other faith-based providers should be afforded adequate legal protections to ensure they are not forced to provide services that are contrary to fundamental moral values. We strongly support the Religious Freedom Restoration Act and the inclusion of conscience protection language in annual appropriations and laws and regulations that would otherwise require us to perform procedures contrary to our religious beliefs. We will also oppose efforts to prevent us from treating all who come to us for care, no matter who they are.



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MINISTRY TRADITION

Catholic health and social service organizations represent one of the oldest and largest traditions of public service in our nation. The role of voluntary private institutions has its roots in our nation's Constitution and Bill of Rights, which guarantee the freedoms of association, religion and speech. Catholic health care providers are participants in the healing ministry of Jesus Christ. Our mission and our ethical standards in health care are rooted in and inseparable from the Catholic Church's teachings about the dignity of the human person and the sanctity of human life from conception to natural death. These values form the basis for our steadfast commitment to the compelling moral implications of our health care ministry, whether it be caring with compassion for all persons, throughout all stages of life; insisting on the right of all to accessible, affordable health care; or defending and preserving the conscience rights of health care providers, including but not limited to Catholic facilities. Specifically, the *Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services* note that the "ministry is rooted in a commitment to promote and defend human dignity; this is the foundation of its concern to respect the sacredness of every human life from the moment of conception until death."

CHA'S POSITION AND ACTIVITIES

CHA will continue to work with the Administration and congressional leaders to ensure that public policies reflect the importance of religious freedom and conscience clause protections in the delivery of health and social services. We will advocate for measures that protect and defend human life from conception to natural death and allow us to maintain our Catholic identity by serving any person in need of our care in alignment with our values and beliefs. Specifically, we seek to address:

- **Provider Conscience Protections**—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, provider 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.
- **The Protection of Religious Freedom** – CHA will analyze legislation and administrative regulations and suggest appropriate amendments to protect religious health care entities from intentional or unintentional efforts to abridge their religious freedom.