

CATHOLICS
FOR
CHOICE

IN GOOD CONSCIENCE

September 27, 2010

The Honorable Kathleen Sebelius
United State Department of Health and Human Services
Hubert H. Humphrey Building, Room 120F
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Sebelius:

I am writing to urge you to include coverage for the full-range of contraceptive options in the list of new preventive services available through the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. I also ask that you encourage the Institute of Medicine to recommend that comprehensive family planning services be included in the list of future covered services. Public surveys consistently demonstrate strong and unequivocal support among Catholics for public funding of contraception.

Catholic women believe that healthcare providers should make a variety of contraceptive methods available and accessible to their patients. Three-quarters of Catholics support requiring health insurance plans to cover birth control pills (75%) and nearly eight in ten (78%) oppose allowing pharmacists to refuse to fill birth control prescriptions. (Belden Russonello and Stewart, 2008).

I am particularly concerned about the misinformation presented by conservative Catholic groups and the US Conference of Catholic Bishops regarding the definition of FDA-approved contraceptive methods as preventive services. Access to comprehensive family planning methods is an important part of reducing the rate of unplanned pregnancy and the need for abortion. President Obama has said that it is a priority for his administration. Deciding when and whether to have children is among the most important decisions individuals and couples make. In spite of the hierarchy's opposition to most methods of family planning, Catholics throughout the world use modern methods of contraception and believe that using such methods is exactly what good Catholics should do. According to the National Survey of Family Growth, administered by the Census Bureau, 97% of Catholic women who are sexually active have used a modern contraceptive method at some point in their lives (2002).

As a Catholic, I want you to know that the Catholic bishops' conference does not speak for me, nor does it speak for the majority of Catholics who overwhelmingly approve of contraceptive use.

Please ensure that American women—Catholic and non-Catholic alike—have access to a comprehensive and affordable list of family planning methods, including all forms of FDA-approved contraceptives.

Sincerely,



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