

From: [Janice Jarrett](#)
To: [E-OHPSCA2713.EBSA](#)
Subject: Women's Health
Date: Wednesday, August 10, 2011 6:08:11 PM

Dear Officials of HHS:

I just read the obituary of a brave woman who challenged the status quo and insisted only a few decades ago to make sure and include women in standard scientific tests to help cure diseases. As in the ubiquitous use of "he" for both male and female human beings, women were ignored in seeking findings to improve human health by our own government agencies. At least until a brave woman put in a position of power acted on our behalf. It is not surprising to note that she was fiercely opposed. This astonishing oversight, this lopsided view, is as disturbing in hindsight as other shameful discriminations this country has addressed over the years.

Looking back, we can see the incredible injustice she exposed, and can only estimate the number of women who suffered and perished because of the inequality BUILT into the system.

Now, you have a chance to be like her. Because now you have a threat to equality posed by those who would enforce their religious beliefs on others. The right of the individual to not suffer discrimination based on religion is one of the ones fought for by the founders of the US. That's why many fled their country of origin. And whatever the personal beliefs of the founders, they advocated the separation of church and state. Besides laws, institutional policies are crucial to how and where these freedoms stay protected.

So:

I join with the American Association of University Women (AAUW) in asking you to accept the recommendations of the Institute of Medicine as pertain to coverage of preventive care under the new health care law, and to reject any exemptions for "religious employers." These preventive services are a critical element of the new law and would provide countless women better access to necessary health care.

While AAUW believes that "religious refusal" exemptions unjustly deny women access to contraceptive services, others, driven by an ideological distaste for all contraceptive services, are pushing the government to make exemptions even larger. Indeed, some groups are pushing for the exemption to apply to religiously-run health providers, so hospitals with religious affiliations would be exempt from the coverage requirement, even though they employ people of all faiths and ideologies. If granted, this larger exemption would deny access to thousands of women just because of where they work.

I urge you to ensure women have access to quality preventive care by accepting IOM's recommendations and rejecting the proposed religious refusal exemption provisions.

Thank you for your time and consideration,
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