

From: [nancy foster](#)
To: [E-OHPSCA2713.EBSA](#)
Subject: Reject exemptions for "religious employers" to coverage of women't preventive care.
Date: Thursday, August 11, 2011 9:54:06 AM

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.

Contraception is a vital medical treatment for many women, and no employer has a right to prevent a female employee from following her own mind and her doctor's health care advice. Each prescription for contraception is written for an individual, and no individual is forced to use contraception against her will and her own personal religious conscience, so there is no valid reason to permit employers to exercise a religious choice in their employees' health care decisions in this area any more than it would be regarding medication and treatment for any other.

Otherwise, you are saying that women are competent to make medical decisions only about their employers' religiously-approved parts of their OWN BODIES. This is ridiculous on its face and shouldn't be permitted. The goal for these so-called "religious employers" is to expand their standing under the law into other areas of women's health decisions, and you shouldn't reward their disingenuous stand in order to try to placate them. Such people won't be happy until they take away all women's rights to make medical choices, and pretending you don't know that simply doesn't cut it. Don't help them control and infantilize women.