

**From:** [Suford Lewis](#)  
**To:** [E-OHPSCA2713.EBSA](#)  
**Subject:** Contraception as preventive health care  
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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.

This is not freedom of religion! It forces women to abide by other people's religious principles to their own detriment. That is directly against the establishment of religion! Any religious exemption that means that someone in the normal course of doing their job can suddenly refuse to do their job because some part of it is against their religion is being empowered to harm people of different religious persuasions. Worse, such religious exemption comes with no warning to those of other religions that they cannot be treated according to their own religion by this person or employer but must find some other resource. There is not always a possibility to do this; it can generate real hardship. This amounts to religious persecution.

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.