

From: [Janice](#)
To: [E-OHPSCA2713.EBSA](#)
Subject: Keep Women's Preventative Medicine as Science-Based, Not Ideologically Driven
Date: Tuesday, August 23, 2011 1:29:55 PM

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.

An expanded exemption would allow an employer to deny their employees access to care that doctors, medical associations, and the IOM consider necessary. Besides, with or without an employer exemption, if an *employee* is opposed to contraception on religious grounds, she's unlikely to fill a prescription for birth control. But these exemptions are also a little sinister.

Religious refusal provisions allow the decision makers at "religious employers" to determine what sort of contraception, if any, their female employees will have access to. If the existing religious refusal exemption is expanded, it would create a broad definition for "religious employers," and could impact all employees at some schools, hospitals, charities, and elsewhere – even if the employee does not share the faith of their employer.

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.

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