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Comment On: EBSA-2010-0018-0002

Group Health Plans and Health Insurance Issuers Relating to Coverage of Preventive Services under Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act: Amendment

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General Comment

The Catholic Church has made news as opposing the definition of an employer as it is given in the new health care law. The Church wants the definition of a religious employer to include all public service organizations such as schools, hospitals, and charities, that consider themselves Catholic. In this way, Catholic schools, universities and hospitals will be able to exclude coverage of contraceptives and sterilization from the health insurance coverage offered to employees of these institutions.

Catholic schools, universities, hospitals, and charities employ tens of thousands of people. Very few are vowed religious. Employment includes Catholics and non-Catholics. They serve people who may or may not be Catholic.

Those who work for Catholic schools, universities, hospitals, and charities deserve the same protection of health insurance coverage as those who work for any other employer. Including contraceptives and sterilization in their health insurance coverage gives them the same opportunity to choose such health care while not infringing on their right to refuse such health care. However, if coverage is denied, they have no option. Individual free choice and individual conscience is respected.

Changing the regulations to allow schools, universities, and hospitals to exclude contraceptives and sterilization from health insurance coverage denies individual rights while enforcing some kind of "group" conscience on others.

I urge the government to keep the definition of a religious employer as it is now stated in the regulations.