



MEDIA INQUIRIES

Jenny Kraska
Executive Director
303-894-8808

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CATHOLIC BISHOPS RESPOND TO BILL SEEKING TO EXPAND INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH CARE SERVICES, DRUGS, DEVICES, PRODUCTS & PROCEDURES

(Denver, CO) The Catholic Bishops of Colorado believe that HB18-1438 is a grave and unconstitutional encroachment by government into the realm of religion. The bill requires all individual and group health benefit plans to provide coverage for reproductive health care services, drugs, devices, products, and procedures such as abortion and sterilization. The bill is a clear and unprecedented intrusion of the government upon the freedom of churches and people of faith.

This bill targets employers, including many church ministries, by requiring them to pay for insurance coverage of drugs or procedures they find morally offensive. One of the mechanisms the bill uses is the insufficient 4-part legal definition of “religious employer” which fails to protect charitable organizations, hospitals and schools sponsored by religious organizations, as well as private organizations. The people who will be most impacted by this are the poor and vulnerable who are aided and accompanied by many faith-based organizations.

Moreover, the language of this legislation creates problems even for those religious employers who do qualify for protection under the religious exemption provision. The bill prohibits insurance plans from imposing “restrictions or delays” with regard to coverage of services, drugs, devices, products or procedures, a standard that may not be possible for religious employers which are in the process of obtaining a religious exemption and notifying enrollees.

All people of good will should reject the attempts by our Colorado Legislature to trample on the First Amendment. The framers of the Constitution intended for all religious beliefs and practices to be accommodated, not simply those considered acceptable by the cultural climate of the day.

We support those provisions of HB18-1438 that deal with screenings for diseases, such as breast cancer and cervical cancer. We find it deplorable that these important women’s health issues are being used as a pawn

by abortion and contraception advocates to limit the influence of religious organizations in public policy and to drive the Church out of the business of education, health and human services.

The Church has an obligation to serve, and therefore, it needs the freedom to serve without government coercion of conscience and intrusion into religious beliefs. We encourage all people of good will to continue to pray for the protection of religious freedom in every sector of our society as guaranteed by the first amendment and to contact your State Representative and Senator and ask them to oppose this dangerous and unnecessary legislation.

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