



December 3, 2015

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Paul Ryan
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Harry Reid
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senate and House Leaders:

We are writing on behalf of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Catholic Health Association of the United States, Catholic Charities USA and Catholic Relief Services in support of provisions known as *The Abortion Non-Discrimination Act (ANDA) included in the House Labor, HHS Appropriations bill*, which would permanently codify protections for individual and institutional health care providers' conscience rights and provide remedies for violations of those rights. *We request that these provisions, Sec. 530 (d) and (e), be included in any final FY 2016 Omnibus Appropriations bill.*

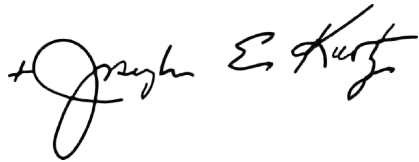
Since 2004, Congress annually has enacted provider conscience protections known as the "Weldon Amendment." That Amendment protects providers from discrimination on the basis that the provider does not provide, pay for, provide coverage of, or refer for abortions. We view this existing legal protection as essential for the continuation of both Catholic health ministries and our nation's commitment to freedom of religion and of conscience. We believe it should be codified permanently into law rather than being annually renewed through a rider on the Labor-HHS Appropriations legislation.

We also believe additional remedies for violations of provider conscience protections are essential. Unfortunately, current laws do not recognize the right of individual or institutional health care providers to go to court to defend themselves against discrimination on the basis of conscience. Under current law, the sole means of enforcement is through the HHS Office for Civil Rights, which has proven inadequate.

ANDA will allow the current laws to work as they should by providing for injunctive relief and for the measured judicial and administrative penalties needed to stop discrimination. This would mean that instead of facing potential loss of all of their federal Labor/HHS funds, a state would only face remedies tailored to the particular violation following judicial or administrative procedures. This makes the protection more proportionate and more effective.

We would appreciate your bipartisan support to enact ANDA this year, in order to provide permanent and enforceable protections for individual and institutional health care providers' conscience rights. Please feel free to contact us or our staff if you have any questions on this important issue.

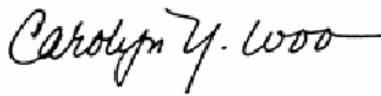
Sincerely,



Most Reverend Joseph E. Kurtz, D.D.
Archbishop of Louisville
President
U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops



Sr. Carol Keehan, DC
President and CEO
Catholic Health Association
of the United States



Dr. Carolyn Y. Woo
President & CEO
Catholic Relief Services



Sr. Donna Markham, OP, PhD
President and CEO
Catholic Charities USA