



November 17, 2011

Dear ACNM Leaders:

The health care reform law (known as the Affordable Care Act) required the Institute of Medicine (IOM) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to establish a list of women's preventive health services for which group health plans would be required to cover without copayment. Well-woman visits and contraception services were among the proposed services and were approved by HHS in August 2011. Group health plans must comply with these regulations as of August 1, 2012.

ACNM has [signed a letter](#) to U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius in conjunction with other organizations, including ACOG and AWHONN, objecting to an exemption placed in the regulation which would allow a religious institution, such as a church or religious order, to provide a group health plan to their employees without covering contraceptive services. There are growing concerns that the Administration is considering expanding this exemption to include other employers with religious affiliations, such as hospitals and charity organizations.

Our decision to endorse this letter was based on the [ACNM Position Statement on Reproductive Health Choices](#) which states, "*Every woman has the right to make reproductive health choices that meet her individual needs.*" The statement further addresses the complexity of choice by acknowledging "*the wide range of cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity of CNMs/CMs and their clients allowing for a variety of personal and professional choices related to reproductive health care.*"

ACNM supports the rights of individual health care professionals to be guided by their conscience in personal delivery of health services and to refer women for services they cannot provide. We also support the right of a woman to self-determine health care choices that meet her personal needs, including spiritual or religious convictions. These are personal choices, not institutional choices.

ACNM believes that a broad religious exemption for employers specific to contraception contradicts our position on women's right to reproductive health choices. We support the IOM findings that access to family planning counseling and a full array of family planning services is vital for women's health and well-being.

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