

March 4, 2013

The Honorable John A. Boehner  
Speaker of the House  
H-232, The Capitol  
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Eric Cantor  
Majority Leader  
H-329, The Capitol  
Washington DC 20515

Dear Speaker Boehner and Leader Cantor:

We, the undersigned representing millions of Americans, strongly support enactment of protections supporting religious liberty and freedom of conscience. We strongly urge House leadership to take steps necessary to include such protections in the FY2013 Continuing Resolution, a must-pass piece of legislation.

A vital First Amendment right is threatened by the HHS mandate. The mandate will force religious entities to either violate their conscience in health care coverage, or face steep fines by refusing to comply. Such fines threaten loss of health care coverage, especially impacting families, or even jobs. The mandate also exempts churches, but not other religious entities, charities, health care providers or individuals. The government dictating which religious groups and individuals are, and are not, religious enough to be exempt from government health care mandates is a gross breach of the Constitution's religious freedom protections.

A large portion of the nation's social services is provided by religious organizations which are not recognized as "religious" under the terms of the mandate. The mandate contains no exemption for these organizations that have moral and religious objections. Either such charities will shut down altogether rather than violate their moral principles, or they will be compelled to use scarce resources to pay punitive fines, thus diverting funds intended to serve the poor.

Other acts of government discrimination against health care workers must also be addressed by strengthening existing conscience laws. Nurses, medical students, and other health care workers should not be threatened by the government, or entities receiving federal funds, when it comes to matters related to abortion or other services to which they may object.

As you are aware, the HHS mandate is already in effect for businesses, such as Hobby Lobby, and will directly impact non-exempt religious organizations beginning August 1, 2013.

Rep. Diane Black is introducing legislation similar to what was included in last year's House Labor, Health and Human Services Appropriations bill to protect religious freedom in health care and health care coverage. We urge you to include such language in the FY2013 CR to restore conscience protections.

Respectfully,

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cc:

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy, Majority Whip

The Honorable Hal Rogers, Chairman, House Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Fred Upton, Chairman, House Energy and Commerce Committee

*\* Institutional affiliation provided for the purpose of identification only.*