Dear Speaker Boehner and Leader Cantor:

The undersigned pastors and Christian leaders write to raise serious concerns over what some have called the "HHS mandate" or "contraceptive mandate" contained in the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) June 28, 2013 final rule. This rule mandates that all health insurance plans in the individual and group market cover all FDA approved "contraceptive methods and sterilization procedures," including drugs and other devices that can destroy life in its early stages.

This mandate was not necessary nor warranted under the provision of "preventive care services for women" contained in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, otherwise known as Obamacare. Worse still is the fact that the mandate essentially ignores the conscience rights of many Americans of religious faith. Our country was founded on certain freedoms, the first of which is the freedom of religion. The ability of a religious person to follow their conscience is not only a God-given right; it has long been a protected right for Americans. It is unfathomable to think of this country denying religious freedoms to her citizens.

The final rule issued June 28, 2013 by the Administration grants a narrow exemption to houses of worship, but the fact remains that the vast majority of religious organizations and businesses will be required to choose between violating their consciences and dropping their health coverage for employees. This mandate is all the more egregious in that it includes drugs and devices that are known, and scientifically shown, to function in ways that can cause abortion both before and after implantation. Several varieties of the morning-after-pill covered by this mandate have this abortive result. The conscience rights of those who object to coverage of such drugs is clearly violated by the Administration's action.

Due to the significant opposition to this mandate, many people of faith had hoped that the Administration would protect the conscience rights of all people who have moral or religious objections to covering contraceptives, abortion inducing drugs and sterilization procedures. Tens of thousands of comments have been submitted to HHS urging conscience protections be included in the various rule proposals. In the end, however, the Administration's offer of a so-called "accommodation" fails to protect individuals, businesses and non-profit organizations.

The "contraceptive mandate" with the requirement that there be no co-pay to the patient means millions of Americans will incur the additional cost for these drugs and devices. Regardless of the accounting gimmicks in the final rule designed to shift costs to insurers, employers are still mandated to be the legal gateway to coverage that violates their religious freedom. Forcing religious entities into this position is a severe blow to our religious liberty. Thomas Jefferson drafted the Virginia Act for Establishing Religious Freedom in 1779; it passed in 1786 and set the stage for the First Amendment to the Constitution. In it Jefferson states: "to compel a man to furnish contributions of money for the propagation of opinions which he disbelieves, is sinful and tyrannical."

Cc:
The Honorable Kevin McCarthy, Majority Whip
The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers, Chair, House Republican Conference
The Honorable Hal Rogers, Chairman, House Appropriations Committee
The Honorable Jack Kingston, Chair, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies
The Honorable Fred Upton, Chairman, House Energy and Commerce Committee
The Honorable Joe Pitts, Chair, House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health

Signed by:

Trinity Evangelical Church, North Reading MA
Mr. and Mrs. Irvin L. Coleman, Erie PA

Benton Bible Chapel, Woodsville NH
Pastor Sandra Baney, Dauphin PA

Dr. Robert Leland, Presque Isle ME
Alan Hontz, Hershey PA

Pastor Albert Tartaglino, Riverton CT
Mrs. Chavva Yurkonis, Lebanon PA

Pastor Steve Skystimas, Waterbury CT
Mr. Edwrd Mann Jr., York PA

Mr. and Mrs. Lewis Dekker, Hawthorne NJ
Mr. and Mrs. Donald Grant, Lock Haven PA

Pastor Wong Young, Absecon NJ
Mrs. Patricia Muniz, Muncy PA

New Jersey State Council Knights of Columbus, Trenton NJ
Mr. Benny Matthew Gover, Washington DC

Mr. Randall W. Martin, Bayville NJ
Christian Life Center, Riverdale MD

Reverend Eleanor J Edwards, Piscataway NJ
Faith, Hope & Love, Inc., Marriottsville MD

Mr. Fred Cosh, Middletown NY
Chaplain Linda Kendall, Berlin MD

Mrs. Desiree Bernstein, Brooklyn NY
Mr. Richard Moyers, Woodstock VA

Massena Pilgrim Holiness Church, Massena NY
Mrs. Patricia Fertich, Jettersville VA

Lindley Community Church, Lindley NY
Jerusalem Baptist Church, Quinton VA

Mrs. Diane Moder, Pittsburgh PA
Mr. and Mrs. Mark Racheau, Richmond VA

Pastor Thomas Lawrence, Jeannette PA
Patrick Springs Christian Church, Collinsville VA

Smithtown Community Church, Falls Creek PA
Crossroads Church, New Martinsville WV

Christ Bible Church of Cranberry, Evans City PA

Mr. and Mrs. Irvin L. Coleman, Erie PA

Mr. Michael Courtwright, Elkins WV
Reverend Gilliam Gordon Jr., Middlesex NC

Lakedale Church of God, Fayetteville NC
Mr. Phillip Oakley, Morganton NC

Theresa Burleson, Asheville NC
Pastor and Mrs. Richard Lister, Anderson SC

Tony Foster, Greenwood SC
Mr. Bart Peacher, Fort Mill SC

Mr. Larry Tolbert, Cedartown GA
Reverend James Lester, Woodstock GA

McDonough Christian Church, Hampton GA
Mrs. Regina Steptoe, Soperton GA

Moon's Grove Baptist Church, Colbert GA
Pastor John Townsend, Ashburn GA

Mrs. Katherine Negrini, Port Orange FL
Mr. Richard Keene, Edgewater FL

St. Joseph Catholic Church, Jacksonville FL
Pastor Barrett M Lampp, Tallahassee FL

Pastor Henry Fullington, Bascom FL
Pastor Earon James, Pensacola FL

Reverend Kent Keller, Miami FL
Mr. Martin Towne, Fort Myers FL
Signed by:

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Mrs. Marilyn R. Staley, Dunedin FL
Mr. Monty Fods, Wadley AL
Walter Hill Baptist Church, Smyrna TN
Collegedale Church, Collegedale TN
Eagles Nest Christian Fellowship, Memphis TN
Gene Kelley, Iron City TN
Susan Rodriguez, Brandon MS
Pastor Danny Avery, Columbus MS
Jann James, Louisville KY
Flat Lick Cumberland Presbyterian Church, Hopkinsville KY
Grove City Church of God, Grove City OH
Pastor Bobby Isaacs, Cleveland OH
Middle Sandy EP Church, Homeworth OH
Pastor Douglas Beggs, Willard OH
Lebanon House of Praise, Lebanon OH
Monroe Church of the Nazarene, Monroe OH
Living Hope Ministries, Minneapolis MN
Pastor Logan Almy, Duluth MN
Pastor Greg Lawrence, Mankato MN
Pastor Brandon Bellomo, Pierz MN
New Hope Church, Timber Lake SD
Kankakee Valley Family Church, Bradley IL
Mr. Mike Steffen, Moline IL
Pastor Thomas Willcox, Branson MO
Lawrence Heights Christian Church, Lawrence KS
Living Word Christian Church, Mulpame KS
The Way Christian Center, Hammond LA
Hardin UMC, Sidney OH
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Pastor and Mrs. Neal Brown, Lapel IN
Pastor Ron Meyer, Fairmount IN
Becky Benz, North Manchester IN
Mr. David Voyles, Salem IN
Reverend and Mrs. Daniel Bloesch, Attica IN
Mrs. Judith Borisen, Sterling Heights MI
Calvary Bible Church, Kalamazoo MI
Lisa Ulman, Scotts MI
Path of Life Ministries, Ludington MI
Pastor Aaron Jameson, Des Moines IA
St. Thomas Lutheran Church, Marcus IA
Pastor Ronald Stehr, Red Wing MN
Hope Church, Rosemount MN
Reverend Bart Moeseman, Saint Paul MN
Pastor Howard Googins, Saint Paul MN
Dr. Joshua Moon, Minneapolis MN
Ms. Natalie Hodapp, Mankato MN
In His Service Ministry, Little Falls MN
Reverend and Mrs. Harry Koops, Platte SD
Dr. and Mrs. Donald D. Van Etten, Rapid City SD
Pastor and Mrs. Jason McClenthen, Loves Park IL
Ridgeview Baptist Church, Danville IL
Erik Jackson, Ozark MO
Dr. Gary Parkhurst, Overland Park KS
Fran Cupples, Fullerton NE
Mr. Gordon Labauve III, Addis LA
Signed by:

Mr. James Bryant, Harrison AR
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Grace Baptist Church, Durant OK
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Mrs. Rachel Rice, Longview TX
Church Fellowship International, Henderson TX
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Maggie Svoboda, Canyon Lake TX
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Mr. James Allen, Round Rock TX
Mr. Charles Reeder, Westminster CO
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Church Of God In Christ, Denver CO
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Mr. Timothy E. Stuehmeyer, Colorado Springs CO
Shepherd of the Valley Church - LCMS, Oceanside CA
Calvary Chapel Rialto, Rialto CA
Pastor Robert McCulley, Hemet CA
Los Osos Christian Fellowship, Los Osos CA
Dr. and Mrs. Ernest Williams, Reedley CA
Pastor and Mrs. David Sawkins, San Jose CA
Pastor Timothy Molter, Chico CA
Soul's Harbor Nazarene Church, Woodburn OR
Hands of Grace Deaf Church, Cambridge VT
Nash Road Free Methodist Church, North Tonawanda NY
Beech Creek Wesleyan Church, Beech Creek PA
Mrs. Susan Turner, Colorado Springs CO
Reverend Brad Saffell, Sheridan WY
Miss Virginia Gomez, Kanab UT
Community Church of Joy, Phoenix AZ
Wenden Bible Church, Wenden AZ
Mr. Art Reynolds, Goodyear AZ
Mrs. Peggy Michaels, Oracle AZ
Mike Alameda, Tucson AZ
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Emmanuel Ministries Int'l, Albuquerque NM
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Pastor and Mrs. Joel Biangco, Carson CA
Mrs. Rose Biangco, Carson CA
Mr. Fernando Gonzalez, Pasadena CA
Adam Noritake, Diamond Bar CA
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Paula Lange, San Diego CA
Ms. Mary Johnson, San Bernardino CA
Reverend and Mrs. Scott M. Pearson, Taft CA
Mrs. Dorothy Regan curley, Lancaster CA
Mr. Carl E. Serkland, Livermore CA
Pastor Ralph Hiatt, Modesto CA
Pastor William Eckmann, Kaneohe HI
Mrs. Lois Salapka, Chewelah WA
Mrs. Annette Reino Sindona, Millwood NY
Calvary Baptist Church, Monaca PA
Moore's Mountain Church, Mechanicsburg PA

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Signed by:

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Dr. and Mrs. Carson Moseley, Taylorsville NC  
Ridge Baptist Church, Summerville SC  
Marks Baptist Church, Augusta GA  
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Capernaum Ministries Inc., Lake Wales FL  
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Reverend William Schroeder, Pleasant Hill MO  
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Common Ground Community Church, Pocahontas AR  
Father's House Church, Greenville TX  
Pastor and Mrs. Eduardo De Castro, El Paso TX  
New Life Church, Colorado Springs CO  
Living Hope Baptist Church, Whittier CA  
Abundant Life Church, Redlands CA  
Oasis of Faith Church, Oakley CA  
Mr. Reed Warren, Burlington WA  

Calvary Hill Church of God, Lawrenceburg TN  
Leesburg Baptist Church, Morton MS  
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Fowlerville Church of the Nazarene, Fowlerville MI  
Central Wesleyan Church, Holland MI  
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