



## FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE CALL TO ACTION

### Urge Congress to Move the Conscience Protection Act Forward!

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) commended the U.S. House of Representatives for passing the Conscience Protection Act of 2016 (S. 304) on July 13 in a 245-182 bipartisan vote. "We now urge Congress to move this vital legislation forward as part of this year's must-pass appropriations package," Cardinal Dolan and Archbishop Lori said.

In 2014, California started forcing almost all health plans in the state to cover elective abortions, even late-term abortions. Religious employers in California that offer group health plans to their employees lodged an objection with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), which has oversight responsibility for enforcing federal conscience laws. **On June 21, HHS declared, contrary to the plain meaning of current federal law that the California Department of Managed Health Care can continue to force all health plans under its jurisdiction to cover elective abortions.**

What is more, other states such as Washington and New York may be following California's lead. These actions clearly violate a federal law known as the Weldon Amendment, which forbids governments receiving federal health care funds to discriminate against those who decline to take part in abortion or abortion coverage. Unfortunately, this amendment has limitations that may make it difficult to enforce.

While HHS badly interpreted the Weldon amendment, the Conscience Protection Act (CPA) of 2016 will make it even clearer that sponsors or providers of health plans that do not include elective abortion cannot be discriminated against. The CPA will protect health care providers and entities from being forced to pay for or participate in abortions, and allow victims of discrimination a "right of action" to defend their rights in court. For example, nurses threatened with loss of their jobs unless they assist in abortions have found they have no right to go to court to see the law enforced. Congress should reaffirm a principle that has long enjoyed broad bipartisan support: **Government should not force hospitals, doctors, nurses and other providers to stop offering much-needed health care because they cannot in good conscience participate in destroying a human life.**

#### Recommended Actions to take immediately:

- Send emails to your members of Congress at [HumanLifeAction.org](http://HumanLifeAction.org)
- Call Congress. If needed phone members can be obtained by calling the U.S. Capitol at 202-224-3121.
- Follow us on Twitter @HumanLifeAction and retweet our posts. Repost the link to this alert on your Facebook page or other social media platforms
- Pray for the enactment of the Conscience Protection Act

#### Suggested Message to the House:

I urge you to include the Conscience Protection Act of 2016 in this year's must-pass appropriations package. Enacting this law is even more urgent with the recent decision by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to allow the state of California to continue forcing health plans to cover elective abortions. This bill is needed now to stop further discrimination against all people who respect unborn human life. It is wrong for government to force Americans to violate their deeply held convictions on respect for human life.

Background documents can be found at [www.usccb.org/conscience](http://www.usccb.org/conscience).