



September 25, 2008

Department of Health and Human Services
Office of Public Health and Science
Attn: Brenda Destro
Hubert Humphrey Building
200 Independence Avenue SW, Room 728E
Washington, DC 20201

Re: RIN 0991-AB48

Dear Secretary Leavitt:

The Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs (AMCHP) is opposed to the recently promulgated "Provider Conscience Regulation" issued by the Department of Health and Human Services. While we strongly agree that federal funds should not support morally coercive or discriminatory practices, there are already at least four existing federal statutes in place to assure this goal. Instead, AMCHP is concerned that the impact of this regulation will be reduced access to health care, health information, and family planning services. We are also concerned that the regulation will potentially preempt state legislation.

The proposed regulation appears to leave the definition of health services – including family planning services and information - open to personal interpretation, and permits health care professionals to withhold services and information according to personal ideology. The regulation therefore confuses rather than clarifies current law, and offers little balance between the rights of health care providers and the rights of women and others to access necessary health care services.

The proposed regulation is unnecessary, threatens to significantly undermine patients' access to critical health care services and information, and could negatively impact scientific research. Comprehensive family planning services are a proven public health success and enjoy widespread public support. We oppose efforts to limit access to these services and call on HHS to withdraw the proposed regulation.

Sincerely,

Michael Fraser, PhD
Chief Executive Officer

• AMCHP •

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