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September 15, 2009

The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama,

On behalf of the over 50 conscience-supportive organizations represented by the Freedom2Care coalition (www.Freedom2Care.org), this letter alerts you to the fact that over 10,000 healthcare professionals and other individuals have signed a petition urging you and Congress to protect conscience rights and stop abortion mandates. The text of the petition for healthcare professionals follows:

My Message as a Healthcare Professional

- As a healthcare professional, I cherish the freedom to care for patients by adhering to **ethical standards of care**.
- I **do not want the government to interfere** with or restrict my freedom to practice medicine without violating the ethical standards I have learned and to which I am committed.
- I want to remain free to conscientiously care for patients according to time-tested, **patient-protecting ethical standards** that include, but are not limited to, the Hippocratic Oath, moral and religious principles, the Nuremberg Code and other longstanding principles of medical ethics.
- I **oppose taxpayer-funded abortions, mandating participation in abortion** and any unlawful discrimination and intolerant coercion that could force healthcare professionals like myself, or hospitals and clinics, to choose between violating ethical commitments or leaving the practice of medicine.
- I *support* laws, regulations and policies that protect and **preserve the freedom of healthcare professionals to care for patients** without being forced to participate in ethically controversial practices.
- The **federal civil rights regulation** noted below is an important tool to clarify and illuminate our civil rights protections, and should be preserved in its entirety.

Therefore, I urge the President, officers of his administration and Members of Congress to protect my freedom to care for patients under the ethical principles to which I am committed--by preserving existing federal civil rights laws and the existing Health and Human Services regulation (published 12/19/2008) that implements those laws, and by specifically excluding abortion in healthcare reform legislation.

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You and your advisors will also be interested to know the results of a public poll of the American public and a national survey of faith-based healthcare professionals (full summary available at <http://www.freedom2care.org/learn/page/surveys>).

The public poll revealed very strong public support (87%) for conscience rights and two-to-one margins specifically supporting the conscience protection regulation and opposing your planned rescission of that regulation. Nearly 50,000 individuals used the Freedom2Care web site to send personal comments opposing the rescission.

The national survey of faith-based healthcare professionals revealed that:

- 95% of faith-based physicians agreed, "I would rather stop practicing medicine altogether than be forced to violate my conscience."
- 32% of faith-based healthcare professionals report having "been pressured to refer a patient for a procedure to which [they] had moral, ethical, or religious objections."
- 20% of medical students say they are "not pursuing a career in Obstetrics or Gynecology" because of perceived discrimination and coercion in that field.

This survey demonstrates the problem of discrimination in health care and that protecting conscience rights through both law and regulation is key to protecting patients' access to health care now and in the future.

We respectfully urge your careful consideration of these views. Thank you.

Sincerely on behalf of the Freedom2Care conscience-supporting organizations,



David Stevens, MD, MA (Ethics)
CEO, Christian Medical Association

cc: Joshua DuBois, Director of Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships