

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4804

ENERGY AND NATURAL
RESOURCES COMMITTEE
ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

February 3, 2012

The Honorable Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I am writing to express my serious concern and objection to the contraception mandate that your Administration plans to force on religious employers, requiring them to cover contraception for their employees under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. This mandate is a direct affront to the religious freedoms protected under the First Amendment of our Constitution. This is not only unacceptable, it is un-American

While the mandate your administration has handed down includes a narrow exemption for certain "religious employers," it excludes thousands more religious organizations that have deep, moral objections to these contraceptive drugs. Religious employers like hospitals, colleges, soup kitchens, and food banks will be required, beginning in 2013, to provide health plans that pay for sterilization, abortifacients, and contraception.

I have heard from the religious employers in my state of West Virginia who, under this mandate, will be forced to provide coverage for drugs that violate the very tenets of their faith. These hospitals, charities, and universities provide irreplaceable services and supports across West Virginia and across this country. When this mandate takes effect, thousands of colleges, health providers, and charities will be left with the impossible choice between ending all health coverage to their employees or closing their doors to the people and communities they serve. These outcomes are intolerable and contradict your administration's own stated purpose to expand access to health care.

I ask that you restore the religious freedoms of these employers and expand the exemption for religious employers to include any and all religious institutions that object to the use of these contraceptive drugs.

Sincerely,



Joe Manchin III
United States Senator