

Office of the Bishop

Diocese of Brooklyn

310 Prospect Park West
Brooklyn, New York 11215

February 2, 2012

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Today, I write to you concerning an alarming and serious matter that impacts the Church in the United States directly, and one that strikes at the fundamental right to religious liberty for all citizens of any faith.

The United States Department of Health and Human Services announced last week that almost all employers, including Catholic employers, will be forced to offer their employees 'health coverage that includes sterilization, abortion – inducing drugs and contraception. Almost all health insurers will be forced to include those “services” in the health policies they write. And almost all individuals will be forced to buy that coverage as a part of their policies.

In so ruling, the Administration has cast aside the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, denying to Catholics our Nation's first and most fundamental freedom, that of religious liberty. And as a result, unless the rule is overturned, we Catholics will be compelled to violate our consciences, or to drop health coverage for our employees, and suffer the penalties for doing so. The Administration's sole concession was to give our institutions one year to comply.

As a Bishop, this troubles me because it indicates that we have failed to teach the truths of the Catholic faith clearly and convincingly. At the same time, as citizens of a nation that prides herself on religious liberty, we should be outraged that the government would demand by means of regulatory action to coerce any institution to cooperate with what that institution deems to be evil and a violation of religious conscience.

Will you join me and stand up to those who would deny us of our 1st Amendment rights? Will you demand with me the right to not only worship freely but to also live according to the dictates of our conscience as we strive to be that healing presence of Christ in our world?

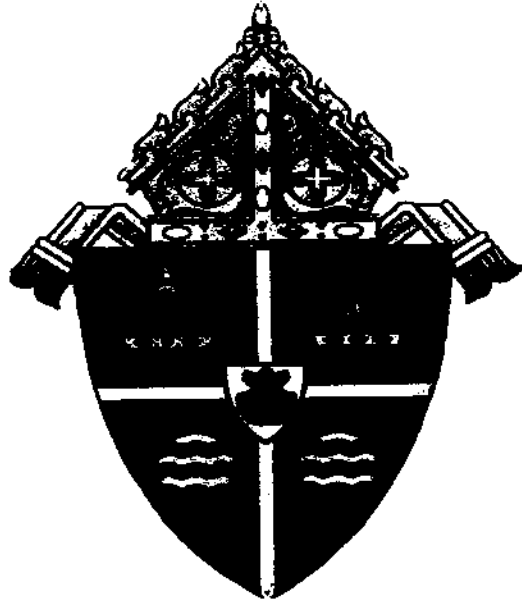
And therefore, I would ask of you three things. First, as a community of faith we must commit ourselves to prayer and fasting that wisdom and justice may prevail, and religious liberty may be restored. Without God, we can do nothing; with God, nothing is impossible. Second, I would also recommend you contact **Senator Charles Schumer at 212-486-4430 and Senator Kristen Gillibrand at 212-688-6262** and ask them to support Senate Bill **S.1467** which will reverse these regulations. Lastly visit www.usccb.org/conscience to learn more about this severe assault on religious liberty, and how to contact Congress in support of legislation that would reserve the Administration's decision.

Asking you to always keep our Nation in your prayers and thanking you for your attention to this important matter, I am

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nicholas DiMarzio".

Most Reverend Nicholas DiMarzio Ph.D., D.D.
Bishop of Brooklyn



Roman Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn

Respect for Rights of Conscience Act:

On January 20, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) reaffirmed a rule that virtually all private health care plans must cover sterilization, abortifacients, and contraception. The rule is set to take effect August 1, 2012. Non-profit religious employers that do not now provide such coverage, and are not exempt under the rule's extremely narrow definition of religious employer, will be given one year until August 1, 2013 to comply.

To correct the threats to religious liberty and rights of the Respect for Rights of Conscience Act has been introduced in **Congress S. 1467**. This measure will ensure that those who participate in the health care system "retain the right to provide, purchase, or enroll in health coverage that is consistent with their religious beliefs and moral convictions." **It is more important than ever that Members of Congress be urged to co-sponsor S. 1467.**

- **ACTION: Contact Senator Charles Schumer, and Senator Kristen Gillibrand and tell them to support S. 1467.**
- **Call Senator Schumer at 212-486-4430**
and
Senator Gillibrand at 212-688-6262.
- Go to www.usccb.org/conscience **for additional information.**