Joint Letter to Congress: 26 Organizations Urge Passage of Conscience Protection Act of 2016

April 19, 2016

The National Association of Catholic Nurses U.S.A. has joined the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and twenty-five other major pro-life, religious, and health care organizations on April 19 urging the U.S. House of Representatives to pass the Conscience Protection Act of 2016 (H.R. 4828). Signatories include ten medical groups representing tens of thousands of health care professionals who object to abortion and are seeking legal protection to serve their patients in good conscience.

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“Federal laws protecting conscientious objection to abortion have been approved for decades by Congresses and Presidents of both parties. Even many ‘pro-choice’ Americans realize that the logic of their position requires them to respect a choice not to be involved in abortion,” they wrote. “Yet it is increasingly clear that the current laws offer far less protection in practice than in theory.”

The Conscience Protection Act (H.R. 4828), introduced on March 22 by Reps. John Fleming, M.D. (R-LA) and Vicky Hartzler (R-MO), addresses several “loopholes” in current federal laws that have allowed violations of conscience rights to continue. The letter cites a recent California mandate for almost all health plans in the state to pay for elective abortions, and the government’s failure to vindicate the rights of New York nurse Cathy DeCarlo after she was pressured to assist at a late-term abortion.

The joint letter highlights the modest nature of the bill, explaining that it “would mean almost no change in the substantive policy of Congress” but “would be an enormous step forward in assuring Americans who serve the sick and needy that they can do so without being forced by government to violate their most deeply held convictions on respect for innocent human life.”

Co-signers included: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Christian Medical Association, Catholic Medical Association, National Council of Catholic Women, March for Life, Education and Defense Fund, American College of Pediatricians, Christ Medicus Foundation, American Association of Pro-Life Obstetricians and Gynecologists, Susan B. Anthony List, National Catholic Bioethics Center, Family Research Council, Americans United for Life Action, National Association of Pro-Life Nurses, The National Association of Catholic Nurses – U.S.A., The Catholic Benefits Association, Catholic Healthcare International, National Right to Life Committee, American Academy of Fertility Care Professionals, National Association of Evangelicals, 3 Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, Sacred Heart Mercy Health Care Centers (Michigan and Minnesota), Knights of Columbus, California Nurses for Ethical Standards, Association of American Physicians and Surgeons, Institute for Youth Development, and Alliance Defending Freedom (Posted 4/24/2016)