

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

February 16, 2012

The Honorable Barack Obama  
President, United States of America  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Over the last few days, a chamber in the Washington state legislature has approved legislation that would require all insurance companies to provide coverage for abortion services if they also provide coverage for prenatal care. The Reproductive Parity Act, HB 2330, approved by the House, and its companion bill, SB 6185, approved by a Senate committee, would have far reaching and alarming consequences for the citizens of Washington State who embrace life, particularly the unborn lives of the next generation. Of perhaps more importance to you, however, is the fact that either bill, if enacted into law, would be a direct violation of federal law which protects providers, in this case insurance companies and health plans, against discrimination for choosing not to provide coverage of abortions.

The Hyde/Weldon amendment expressly preserves the conscience rights of institutional and individual health care entities, including health insurance plans, against discrimination "on the basis that the health care entity does not provide, pay for, provide coverage of, or refer for abortions." Any state that does not abide by this amendment, which has been in effect since 2004 and was most recently included in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2012, risks losing all federally appropriated funds through the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education. The State of Washington, or any other state for that matter, that receives federal funds is prohibited from mandating that insurance plans cover abortion or from requiring that providers refer for such services.

Mr. President, your administration has repeatedly noted your support for conscience protections. You stated in a 2009 speech before a joint session of Congress that "federal conscience laws will remain in place." Secretary Kathleen Sebelius has attested to your support, as has White House Press Secretary Jay Carney at a press conference just a few weeks ago: "The President and this administration have previously expressed strong support for existing conscience protections, including those relating to health care providers." We would hope that your administration would send a strong message to Washington State that enacting legislation in violation of the Hyde/Weldon amendment will jeopardize federal funds to the state.

It is essential that Congress and your administration are clear on this matter should any state refuse to acknowledge fundamental conscience protections. It is certainly our hope that you will fulfill your constitutional role to uphold and enforce current federal law including the Hyde/Weldon amendment. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

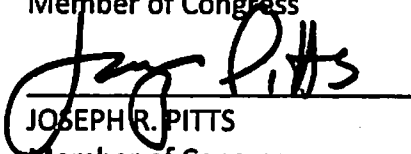
Sincerely,



CATHY MCMORRIS RODGERS  
Member of Congress



CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH  
Member of Congress



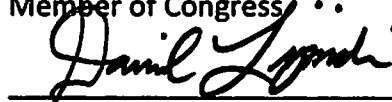
JOSEPH R. PITTS  
Member of Congress



JOHN FLEMING  
Member of Congress



DAN BOREN  
Member of Congress



DANIEL LIPINSKI  
Member of Congress