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For immediate release

Comments being taken on removal of federal 'conscience clause'

A 30-day public comment period on the planned removal of a federal conscience clause for health care workers has opened and will run through April 9.

Samaritan Ministries International urges those concerned about this action to express opinions to the Department of Health and Human Services.

The conscience clause protects health care workers who refuse to perform abortion procedures or other activities that violate their sincerely held beliefs.

The Obama administration announced Feb. 27 that it is "reviewing" the federal regulation put into place by President George W. Bush. The rule codified the protection for those who work at medical facilities that receive federal funding, including Medicare and Medicaid.

Conservative News Service says the review is the first step "toward rescinding the rule altogether."

James Lansberry, vice president of Samaritan Ministries, says that regardless of whether a person supports or opposes abortion, it is unconscionable to forbid doctors to "choose" (in "pro-choice" jargon) to refuse to perform medical procedures that violate their personal moral convictions. "The federal government should be protecting the freedom of all citizens, including those who provide our medical care, not forcing its beliefs on them," Lansberry says.

You can register your opinions on the planned removal of the conscience clause in the following ways:

■ Go to www.Regulations.gov, click on the link "Comment or Submission" link and enter the keywords *rescission proposal*. If you submit document attachments, Microsoft Word is preferred, but the site will also accept WordPerfect or Excel documents.

■ Send e-mail to proposedrescission@hhs.gov. If you submit document attachments, Microsoft Word is preferred, but the site will also accept WordPerfect or Excel documents.

■ Send written comments (one original and two copies) by first-class mail, express mail or overnight mail to Office of Public Health and Science, Department of Health and Human Services, Attention: Rescission Proposal Comments, Hubert H. Humphrey Building, 200 Independence Avenue, SW., Room 716G, Washington, DC 20201.

■ By hand or courier in the mail drop slots in the main lobby of the Hubert H. Humphrey Building, addressed to 716G, Hubert H. Humphrey Building, 200 Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, DC 20201.

All comments will be posted on www.Regulations.gov for public viewing.

Samaritan Ministries is a health care needs-sharing organization founded in 1994. It includes 13,000 member households around the world. For more information about SMI or to contact James Lansberry, call 1-888-268-4377.

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