



**Your voices were heard!**

## **HHS upholds contraceptive coverage without co-pays**

After reviewing more than 200,000 comments from the public – many of them from RWV supporters like you! -- HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius announced earlier today that almost all employers will have to include coverage for women's preventive health services, including contraceptive services, starting in August 2012. The administration, which had faced criticism from religiously affiliated organizations that do not currently cover contraception, announced that it will allow those organizations an additional year, until August 2013, to come into compliance. This new rule requires insurers to offer policies that cover important preventive services with no extra fees, such as co-pays and deductibles.

This is a huge and important victory for women. The US Conference of Catholic Bishops and a few other religious leaders were pushing hard on the administration to create a broader exemption, allowing them to continue to deny women who work for a wide range of organizations affiliated with religious institutions coverage for comprehensive reproductive health services. But thanks to you, HHS heard from more than just conservative religious leaders, they heard from women, too, about just how important these services are to our health.

Raising Women's Voices for the Health Care We Need told HHS that we believe that women deserve full coverage of all their health needs, regardless of where they work, and HHS listened. The administration's decision maintains the narrow exemption for churches and religious organizations that serve primarily members of their own faith, rather than broadening the exemption as the bishops had urged. It affirms the rights of the vast majority of women to make their own decisions about their health, while giving religiously affiliated organizations that currently don't provide contraceptive coverage an extra year to comply with the requirement.

The preventive health services to be covered with no extra fees include comprehensive contraceptive care, screening and counseling for intimate partner violence, screening for gestational diabetes, breastfeeding counseling and equipment, screening for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and a well-woman preventive care visits once a year. The requirement that all FDA approved methods of contraception be covered includes both long-acting methods such as the IUD and emergency contraception (EC).

You can read the formal announcement, [here](#).

And you can [send a new thank you to HHS by clicking here!](#)

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