



Office of the General Secretary

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Memorandum

To: All bishops

From: Monsignor Ronny E. Jenkins, *General Secretary* 

Date: January 20, 2012

Subject: Department of Health and Human Services

Your Eminence / Your Excellency,

Today the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services announced that it will **not** be making any significant change in its nationwide mandate for private health plans to cover sterilization and all FDA-approved contraceptives, including drugs that can cause an early abortion. The only new change is that nonprofit religious organizations that do not provide such coverage now, but are not protected by the mandate's extremely narrow "religious employer" exemption, will be given an additional year to comply with this unchanged mandate (August 2013 instead of 2012). HHS said it plans to require even religious organizations to notify employees of their policy and to provide them with information on other sources for low-cost contraceptives and sterilizations.

Attached to help you in responding to this decision are the following:

- An initial press release from the USCCB with comments from our president, Cardinal-Designate Timothy Dolan;
- A set of five brief "talking points" to cite in talking with media;
- A more detailed "backgrounder" summarizing the key points from the USCCB's earlier comment letter to HHS about this mandate;
- A "question and answer" fact sheet with questions you might be asked;

- The script of a video featuring Cardinal-Designate Dolan, which is being posted on the USCCB web site at www.usccb.org .

- A copy of the recent *Ad limina* Address of the Holy Father to the bishops of USCCB Region IV

We are also assisting many outside experts and religious leaders, Catholic and other, in issuing their own press releases and making their own comments to press about this imposition on religious freedom.

You will be hearing much more from us in future but we hope these immediate materials are of help.