



LEGISLATIVE ALERT

July 14, 2014

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the AFL-CIO, I urge you to vote in support of the Protect Women's Health from Corporate Interference Act (S. 2578). This bill will overturn the negative consequences of the Supreme Court's recent decision in *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores*, ensuring that women's access to critical preventive services will not be blocked.

In the *Burwell* decision, a closely-divided Supreme Court found that closely-held corporations with religious objections to contraceptive coverage could not be required to offer the contraceptive coverage mandated by the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and its implementing regulations. The Affordable Care Act (ACA) requires most health insurance plans to cover preventive services without cost sharing in order to encourage the use of services that can prevent the onset of costly medical conditions. In 2013, 47 million women were covered by this requirement, and women saved a total of \$483 million in out-of-pocket costs for oral contraceptives. However, the Supreme Court's decision allows closely-held corporations with religious objections to exclude certain contraceptive services from coverage.

The Protect Women's Health from Corporate Interference Act will restore women's access to contraceptive services by ensuring that federal laws enacted to promote religious liberty do not interfere with the laws and regulations governing coverage under employment-based health insurance plans.

Birth control is a critical health care service. Studies have found that 99 percent of sexually-active women use contraceptive methods at least once in their lifetime, allowing women to protect their health and decide when and how they may give birth. In addition, 58 percent of women who use oral contraceptives cite noncontraceptive health benefits as a reason for using the method. Contraceptive methods are important in the treatment of endometriosis, preventing cancer, and addressing other health issues.

The religious beliefs of for-profit corporations should not be allowed to trump the medical needs of their employees. Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg noted in her dissent in *Hobby Lobby* that the decision could open the door for employers to object to a wide range of health interventions – from vaccinations to blood transfusions and anesthesia. We believe that blocking access to critical health care services in this fashion is bad public policy and represents a form of workplace discrimination.

We urge you to vote for S. 2578 to prevent employers from discriminating against certain health services on the basis of religious objections.

Sincerely,

William Samuel, Director
Government Affairs Department