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RI Health Exchange Lacks Plan W/Out Abortion Coverage

by Michael Sean Winters

Distinctly Catholic

The press release below from Democrats for Life indicates that the health care exchange set up in Rhode Island has failed to abide by one of the much-debated provisions of the Affordable Care Act, namely, that each exchange must offer at least one plan that does not include abortion coverage. As I have noted before, I think there are plenty of circumstances in which a family might want a plan that covers abortion, even though they never intend to use it, but because other provisions of the given plan meet their needs. But, the ACA inserted this provision to gain the necessary votes to pass the bill into law. And, politically, the last thing the Obama administration needs is another problem with the implementation of the ACA. Secretary Kathleen Sebelius should take a break from writing computer code, call the officials in Rhode Island, and tell them to bring their state exchange into compliance with the law. And, kudos to Democrats for Life for bringing this to our attention!

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Rhode Island Health Care Exchange Violates Conscience Rights

WASHINGTON, DC ? Democrats For Life is urging Governor Lincoln Chafee to honor conscience rights of individuals in the Rhode Island state exchange. All the state plans currently include abortion coverage and provide no options for those who have conscience objections to paying for abortion.

?We fought successfully for no abortion funding in healthcare,? said Kristen Day, Executive Director of Democrats For Life. ?We stood our ground and secured the right of conscience protections for millions of Americans who will be purchasing health insurance in exchanges created under the Affordable Care Act (ACA). The Rhode Island exchange is blatantly violating those conscience rights by hiding the abortion coverage and not offering any alternative plans.?

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After long debate and compromise, the Affordable Care Act (ACA) included important conscience protections for those individuals who oppose funding of abortion. It also includes several specific prohibitions on public funding of abortion and an Executive Order by the President to reinforce those provisions. With respect to insurance policies, the ACA included the Weldon Amendment to ensure that no state can discriminate against a healthcare entity, including an insurance plan, for refusing to pay for or cover abortions.

?There is no reason why this information should be hidden or why there is no plan available to those who oppose abortion,? said Day. ?Yet, there has been no real effort to ensure that those with conscience objections will be informed or given the option to purchase a plan that excludes abortion coverage.?

The Rhode Island exchange has 28 plans available offered by 3 carriers: Blue Cross Blue Shield, United Health Care, and Neighborhood Health Plan. All of the 16 plans for small businesses and 12 plans for individuals and families include the hidden abortion fee. Under Section 1303 of the ACA, the insurance companies will have to collect a separate premium fee for abortion coverage and keep a separate account for abortion money.

"The ACA needs to be followed, and individuals who have moral objections to paying for abortion should be alerted up front if a plan includes abortion coverage,? said Day. They should not be duped into paying for abortion without their knowledge. We urge transparency and the provision of alternative health plans, so that long-standing conscience rights be protected.?

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