



## WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

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**For Immediate Release**

### **NEW BUDGET HEALTH CARE MANDATES IMPEDE RELIGIOUS LIBERTY**

The Wisconsin Catholic Conference is asking legislators to delete two budget provisions that will impede the religious liberty of Catholic organizations and their employees.

One provision mandates that health insurance policies cover contraceptive services. This forces religious organizations that provide health insurance to pay for services they object to on moral grounds.

“Catholic dioceses and other agencies purchase health care insurance for their employees. These policies are structured to respect Catholic moral teaching,” explained WCC Executive Director John Huebscher. “As drafted, the budget would compel these Catholic institutions to purchase services in direct opposition to our religious identity and values.”

“We do not believe people of faith should have to choose between their beliefs and their desire to be generous employers,” he added.

A second provision would impose a duty to dispense prescribed contraceptives on all pharmacies in Wisconsin. The mandate would apply to pharmacies owned and operated by Catholic health care facilities.

The *Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services (ERDs)* that guide Catholic institutions state unequivocally, “Catholic health institutions may not promote or condone contraceptive practices.”

Catholic pharmacies, consequently, do not dispense prescriptions for the purpose of birth control, but they do stock and dispense hormonal contraceptives for non-contraceptive reasons to manage other medical conditions. Also, pharmacy staff return prescriptions they cannot fill to the patient, allowing the patient to attain the prescription elsewhere.

“These two provisions will have the effect of forcing some citizens to act contrary to their religious beliefs. That is why we strongly urge that both provisions be removed from the budget bill,” Huebscher concluded.

-30-

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