March 8, 2018

The Honorable Paul D. Ryan  The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Speaker of the House  Majority Leader
Washington, DC 20515  Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Steve Scalise
Majority Whip
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Ryan, Leader McCarthy, and Whip Scalise:

As we approach the expiration of the current Continuing Resolution, we write to once again ask for your staunch support of the Conscience Protection Act in the final FY18 spending bill. With a pro-life majority in both the House and Senate, a pro-life President in the White House and the overwhelming support of the American people, the time to enact the Conscience Protection Act is now.

The crucial need for strengthened statutory protection from abortion discrimination is clear and ongoing. Last year, many of us had the honor of meeting three courageous nurses: Cathy DeCarlo, Fe Vinoya, and Sandra Mendoza. Ms. DeCarlo was coerced by her employer to participate in the abortion of a 22-week-old unborn child in violation of her conscience. Ms. Vinoya and Ms. Mendoza bravely endured retaliation from their employers when they chose not to assist in abortions. No one should ever be forced to participate in the killing of an unborn child. At the very least, they should have had the ability to defend their rights in court.

Additionally, we are seeing a troubling trend of state abortion mandates in recent years. Beginning in 2014, the California Department for Managed Health Care (DMHC) issued a directive requiring all insurance plans under DMHC authority to immediately cover abortion. This directive means that California churches, religious charities, employers and individuals have no choice but to pay for abortion coverage in their health plans. California’s no exemption policy is a flagrant violation of the First Amendment and a direct violation of the Weldon Amendment. However, this mandate was left unchecked, and the precedent set by California was followed by similar actions in New York and Oregon. Washington State is considering enacting its own abortion mandate this legislative session.
Such discrimination is illegal under existing conscience laws. **But evidently, current law is not sufficient.** Though we are heartened by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Service’s (HHS) recent actions to create the new division of Conscience and Religious Freedom, and the Department’s proposed rule to enforce existing statutory protections, the urgent need for the Conscience Protection Act continues. Under current law, the sole recourse for victims of such discrimination is to file a complaint with the Office of Civil Rights at HHS. The Conscience Protection Act will clarify and strengthen existing federal statutes to permanently ensure that health care providers being penalized by the government for their deeply held personal beliefs—like Cathy DeCarlo and the California churches—have the right to pursue legal action.

We must do everything in our power to see this compassionate, reasonable and modest bill become law so that millions of Americans who believe, as we do, in the sanctity of every life are able to abide by those beliefs without having them trampled upon by their own government. Being an American has always meant experiencing the freedom to live by the dictates of one’s deeply held beliefs at home, at work and in the public square, and we thank you for your support of this critical initiative.

Sincerely,

Diane Black  
Member of Congress

Christopher H. Smith  
Member of Congress

Phil Roe, M.D.  
Member of Congress

Jackie Walorski  
Member of Congress

Vicky Hartzler  
Member of Congress
Steve King  
Member of Congress

Bob Gibbs  
Member of Congress

Justin Amash  
Member of Congress

Earl L. 'Buddy' Carter  
Member of Congress

Matt Gaetz  
Member of Congress

Tom Emmer  
Member of Congress

David Rouzer  
Member of Congress

Mike Kelly  
Member of Congress

Clay Higgins  
Member of Congress

Trent Kelly  
Member of Congress

Jodey Arrington  
Member of Congress

Robert B. Aderholt  
Member of Congress

Doug Collins  
Member of Congress

Darin LaHood  
Member of Congress

Bill Johnson  
Member of Congress

F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr.  
Member of Congress
Kevin Cramer
Member of Congress

Mike Gallagher
Member of Congress

Andy Barr
Member of Congress

Ralph Norman
Member of Congress

Doug Lamborn
Member of Congress

Dave Brat
Member of Congress

Andy Biggs
Member of Congress

Glenn Grothman
Member of Congress

Marsha Blackburn
Member of Congress

Luke Messer
Member of Congress

Rodney Davis
Member of Congress

Keith Rothfus
Member of Congress

Randy Weber
Member of Congress

Mark Walker
Member of Congress
Jason Smith
Member of Congress

Warren Davidson
Member of Congress

French Hill
Member of Congress

Austin Scott
Member of Congress

Alex X. Mooney
Member of Congress

Francis Rooney
Member of Congress

Bill Flores
Member of Congress

David Kustoff
Member of Congress

Adrian Smith
Member of Congress

Louie Gohmert
Member of Congress

Ted S. Yoho, DVM
Member of Congress

Jeff Duncan
Member of Congress

Andy Harris
Member of Congress

Bill Huizenga
Member of Congress

Daniel Lipinski
Member of Congress

Roger W. Marshall
Member of Congress
Brad Wenstrup  
Member of Congress

Liz Cheney  
Member of Congress

Sean P. Duffy  
Member of Congress

Peter J. Roskam  
Member of Congress

Jeb Hensarling  
Member of Congress

Randy Hultgren  
Member of Congress

Gus M. Bilirakis  
Member of Congress

Tim Walberg  
Member of Congress

Todd Rokita  
Member of Congress

David B. McKinley  
Member of Congress

Robert Latta  
Member of Congress

Walter B. Jones  
Member of Congress

Duncan Hunter  
Member of Congress

Pete Sessions  
Member of Congress

Paul A. Gosar, D.D.S.  
Member of Congress

Kristi Noem  
Member of Congress
John J. Duncan, Jr.
Member of Congress

Tom McClintock
Member of Congress

Blaine Luetkemeyer
Member of Congress

Martha Roby
Member of Congress

Lamar Smith
Member of Congress

Bruce Westerman
Member of Congress

Rob Woodall
Member of Congress

Neal F. Dunn, M.D.
Member of Congress

Ron Estes
Member of Congress

Gregg Harper
Member of Congress

Steve Pearce
Member of Congress

Mike Johnson
Member of Congress

Steven Palazzo
Member of Congress

Scott DesJarlais, M.D.
Member of Congress
Glenn 'GT' Thompson  
Member of Congress

Blake Farenthold  
Member of Congress

Roger Williams  
Member of Congress

Lynn Jenkins, CPA  
Member of Congress

Tom Cole  
Member of Congress

Doug LaMalfa  
Member of Congress

Steve Chabot  
Member of Congress

Gary Palmer  
Member of Congress

Larry Bucshon, M.D.  
Member of Congress

Jason Lewis  
Member of Congress

Sam Johnson  
Member of Congress

Kevin Yoder  
Member of Congress

Kenny Marchant  
Member of Congress

CC:  
House Appropriations Committee Chairman Frelinghuysen  
Labor Health and Human Services Subcommittee Chairman Cole