

For Immediate Release

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Contact: GPG

Obama Administration Takes Step Forward by Rescinding Dangerous Bush Administration Conscience Regulations; NFPRHA Disappointed Not Full Repeal

Statement by Clare Coleman, President & CEO of the National Family Planning and Reproductive Health Association (NFPRHA):

“The Obama Administration today announced it will rescind the most harmful elements of the Bush Administration’s December 2008 provider refusal regulation, taking an important step toward ensuring that patients have access to essential health care services. The Bush rule disregarded patients’ health needs by significantly threatening access to abortion care and family planning services, including information, counseling and referrals.

While this new rule is a welcome improvement, the Administration should have gone further and fully repealed the Bush provisions. The Bush rule was and is unnecessary. Individual protections for religious and moral objections are already guaranteed by federal law, going back to 1973: Individuals have long had the right to opt out of providing or participating in providing abortions due to religious or moral objections.

The Administration’s revision rescinds the parts of the Bush rule that were unclear and overly broad, which would have expanded provider refusal protections far beyond current law, taken away patient protections in favor of providers’ beliefs, and threatened states’ enforcement of their own laws. However, the new rule retains the enforcement mechanisms of the Bush rule, providing a clear process for complaints to be handled within federally funded programs in conjunction with the HHS Office of Civil Rights. It also sets out the intent to provide education and outreach to providers and employers. The revision and partial rescission does not alter existing federal health care provider conscience protections statutory protections.

Unfortunately, we expect that, despite this terrible recession and the challenges facing our country, some in the new Republican majority in the House will react to this revision by intensifying their drive to impose their personal beliefs on all Americans’ health care decisions. Congress should reject dangerous legislation that would undermine the critical balance between provider and patient rights. We urge

Members of Congress to reject bills that would assault a woman's right to access the reproductive health services she needs."

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The National Family Planning & Reproductive Health Association (NFPRHA) is a vital membership organization representing the nation's dedicated family planning providers—nurses, nurse practitioners, administrators and other key health care professionals. For 40 years, NFPRHA members have provided comprehensive preventive health care services in thousands of health centers to millions of women and men annually. Every day our members help people act responsibly, stay healthy and plan for strong families.