



## PRESS RELEASE

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# Catholic Medical Association Calls for the Protection of Conscience Rights through Briefs Filed by Alliance Defending Freedom

**Philadelphia, PA**— The Catholic Medical Association continues to stand up for the conscience rights of health care professionals.

CMA's support for the Department of Health and Human Services' Conscience Rights in Health Care Rule was expressed through two friend-of-the-court briefs filed on August 21st by Alliance Defending Freedom. The briefs were filed with federal district courts in California and New York State.

"The Catholic Medical Association is grateful for the action Alliance Defending Freedom has taken on behalf of health care providers everywhere," said CMA President, Dr. John Schirger.

"The ability to exercise conscience is of the utmost importance in every aspect of life, and is of course central to the practice of medicine," added Dr. Schirger.

Also represented in the briefs are three other nonprofits who share the views of CMA on this matter: the American Association of Pro-Life Obstetricians & Gynecologists, the American College of Pediatricians and the National Catholic Bioethics Center.

"Conscience reflects the core of a person's essence and should never be violated by coercion," said Dr. Greg Burke, Co-Chair of CMA's Ethics Committee. "It is a fundamental human right."

In a press release, Alliance Defending Freedom, said the briefs indicate in part that:

*"Congress has repeatedly passed laws demonstrating a bipartisan intent that health care professionals not be coerced into violating their beliefs. However, states have often shown disregard for protecting freedom of conscience for medical practitioners. In response to a prior federal attempt to shore up conscience protections, 13 state attorneys general signed a letter denouncing the regulations, and seven states later filed suit to block them. The brief also lists state attempts to require medical practitioners and institutions to provide abortion referrals and provide counsel or counseling referrals to terminal patients for physician-assisted suicide."*

"If only those willing to engage in death-dealing or mutilating procedures are

allowed into the healing professions, those we serve are put at great risk,” said Dr. Marie Hilliard, Co-Chair of CMA’s Ethic Committee.

Thus, it is critical that the courts determine that the twenty-five federal conscience protection laws must be consistently applied. This not only respects the First Amendment rights of health care providers, but also safeguard patients from agenda driven violations of life and physical integrity.

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The Catholic Medical Association is a national, physician-led community of over 2,300 healthcare professionals consisting of 109 local guilds. CMA mission is to inform, organize, and inspire its members, in steadfast fidelity to the teachings of the Catholic Church, to uphold the principles of the Catholic faith in the science and practice of medicine.

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