

# THE BLUNT AMENDMENT WOULD TRAMPLE EMPLOYEES' RIGHTS AND THREATEN THEIR HEALTH

The Blunt Amendment would allow any employer or insurance company to cut medical benefits and services for workers and patients by citing religious and moral objections of any kind. This wide-ranging proposal would deny tens of thousands of women coverage for contraception and other health benefits, and would effectively render our health insurance system meaningless by allowing employers and insurance companies to deny employees any essential health benefit for virtually any reason.

## AN AMENDMENT THAT THREATENS HEALTH, INDIVIDUAL LIBERTY AND PRIVACY:

- The amendment would allow employers and hospitals to **impose religious dogma on employees and patients**.
- It would allow **any** insurer or employer not to cover any medical service required by the Affordable Care Act based on the religious or moral objections of the insurer, employer, or **any individual employee**.
- The proposed amendment would allow employers to **withhold vital healthcare coverage** based on an employer's professed religious belief. For example, an employer would be permitted to deny coverage for contraception, maternity care for out-of-wedlock pregnancies, or medical coverage for non-believers.
- The amendment **only protects the right to deny care**; it does nothing to protect the rights of employees to access fundamental healthcare.

## THE BLUNT AMENDMENT IS UNNECESSARY AND HARMFUL BECAUSE:

- Healthcare providers are already amply protected under federal and state law.
- The Obama Administration's contraceptive-coverage policy is a fair and balanced approach that protects employee rights while allowing religiously-objecting organizations to avoid paying for or communicating about contraceptive coverage.
- The requirement for contraceptive coverage is fair to both institutions and workers:
  - In one case, the highest court of New York held that a contraception coverage requirement that was less deferential to religious organizations did not substantially burden religious beliefs or practices because "when a religious organization chooses to hire nonbelievers it must, at least to some degree, be prepared to accept neutral regulations imposed to protect those employees' legitimate interests in doing what their own beliefs permit."
  - In a second case, the California Supreme Court held that Catholic Charities was not an arm of the church, but a "nonprofit public benefit corporation," and emphasized that most of the organization's employees "do not belong to the Catholic Church." Consequently, the court wrote, it would be grossly unfair to allow the church hierarchy to veto the health rights of employees – a majority of whom are non-believers.
- It would imperil the health needs of women and children. As confirmed by the Institute of Medicine, access to the full range of FDA-approved contraceptives is essential to women's health and well-being, because unintended pregnancy leads to adverse health outcomes for women and children.