



Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty

3211 FOURTH STREET NE • WASHINGTON DC 20017-1194 • 202-541-3300 • FAX 202-541-3337

Most Reverend William E. Lori
Archbishop of Baltimore
Chairman

Chairman's Statement in Support of Litigants Challenging the HHS Mandate

In March 2012, the USCCB's Administrative Committee stated in *United for Religious Freedom* that the USCCB would continue its opposition to the HHS mandate through legislation, through the Executive Branch, and through the courts. Soon after, Catholic bishops went to federal court in unprecedented numbers to challenge the mandate.

As Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty, I would like to express solidarity with these bishops, as well as the diocesan and other Catholic entities that have joined them as they pursue their lawsuits. Their goal is nothing less than securing the freedom of the Church to continue to obey the Lord's command—and, in turn, to serve the common good—by providing charitable ministries in health care, education, and service to the poor, all without compromising Catholic beliefs.

I am also writing to express deep gratitude to the scores of people and organizations—from various denominations and walks of life—who have challenged the HHS mandate in federal courts around our country over the last year. We continue to pray for the success of all of these lawsuits. As we noted in the Ad Hoc Committee statement, *Our First, Most Cherished Liberty*, “the vision of our founding and our Constitution... guarantees citizens of all religious faiths the right to contribute to our common life together.” And in our Catholic tradition, the right to religious freedom proceeds from the inherent dignity of each and every human person. Accordingly, our concern for religious freedom extends well beyond our own ministries of service.

As Cardinal Timothy Dolan, President of the USCCB, recently emphasized, “[i]n obedience to our Judeo-Christian heritage, we have consistently taught our people to live their lives during the week to reflect the same beliefs that they proclaim on the Sabbath. We cannot now abandon them to be forced to violate their morally well-informed consciences.” Therefore, we express solidarity and appreciation as well for those in the business sector who have courageously challenged the HHS mandate in court. We also note that their actions have been a source of encouragement, particularly because of their high rate of success in obtaining early injunctions to block the mandate.

The latest rule proposed by HHS on February 6, 2013 would clarify the definition of a “religious employer”—which would receive a full exemption from the mandate—by reducing the previous four-part test to a one-part test. Although this small, incremental step is welcomed, most of the serious problems with the definition and mandate remain, and so we will continue our vigorous efforts to correct those remaining flaws. As Cardinal Dolan stated regarding the latest proposed rule, “we welcome and will take seriously the Administration’s invitation to submit our concerns through formal comments, and we will do so in the hope that an acceptable solution can be found that respects the consciences of all. At the same time, we will continue to stand united with brother bishops, religious institutions, and individual citizens who seek redress in the courts for as long as this is necessary.”

Catholics in America have long been advocates for religious liberty, and we continue to affirm this basic right today. We have consistently supported the rights of individuals not to act against their religious beliefs or moral convictions, especially when individuals seek to protect the dignity of human life. As Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee, I would like to urge all people of good will to pray that our leaders, and all people of this great country, will promote and protect religious liberty and its fundamental place in society.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "+ William E. Lori". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend William E. Lori
Archbishop of Baltimore
Chairman