



## **Cardinal O'Malley to Congress: Support the "Abortion Insurance Full Disclosure Act"**

November 1, 2013

WASHINGTON -- The chairman of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Pro-Life Activities wrote to members of the House of Representatives to support the "Abortion Insurance Full Disclosure Act" (H.R. 3279), to address one part of the abortion-related problem in the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

In his Nov. 1 letter, Cardinal Seán O'Malley, Archbishop of Boston, wrote: "Under the ACA, unless state law requires otherwise, each insurer may choose whether to include elective abortions in the health plans it offers on a state health exchange. If the insurer does cover such abortions, the overall health plan may still receive federal tax subsidies; and every enrollee -- regardless of age, sex, or conscientious objection -- must make a separate payment solely to cover other enrollees' abortions. This violates the policies governing all other federal health programs. In no other program may federal funds subsidize any part of a health plan that covers such abortions; and nowhere else does the federal government forbid insurers to allow an 'opt-out' from such coverage on conscience grounds."

Cardinal O'Malley continued that this "substantive problem on abortion" is compounded by the ACA's unique secrecy provisions. The insurer may not answer a concerned purchaser's questions as to whether the plan covers abortions (except when it lists all services at the time he or she is already enrolling in the plan). And it may not reveal how much of the person's premium goes into a separate abortion fund.

"In other words, not only may pro-life people have a very limited choice of health plans that do not violate their consciences -- but the law makes it all but impossible for them to find out which plans they are," Cardinal O'Malley said.

Citing a 2009 poll, Cardinal O'Malley said most Americans, particularly most women, do not want abortion coverage in their health plans.

"H.R. 3279 does not affect the ACA's underlying abortion problem, which is the subject of other legislation we support such as the No Taxpayer Funding for Abortion Act (H.R. 7)," Cardinal O'Malley said. "The new bill addresses only this unprecedented policy of government-enforced secrecy. Health plans will have to report on their coverage of abortion, and on the extra payment they charge to cover abortions. Only then will Americans be enabled to make an informed choice of a health plan for themselves and their families that does not violate their moral and religious convictions. This should be a point of agreement between lawmakers who consider themselves both 'pro-life' and 'pro-choice.' Any claim of 'choice' is empty if the law conceals the facts needed to make that choice. Please co-sponsor H.R. 3279 and help enact it into law."

Full text of the letter is available online: [http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/abortion/upload/Cdl-OMalley-Abortion-Insurance-Disclosure-Bill\\_11-1-13.pdf](http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/abortion/upload/Cdl-OMalley-Abortion-Insurance-Disclosure-Bill_11-1-13.pdf)

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