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Make the Conscience Protection Act Law *Stop Coercion of Healthcare Providers*

*Excerpts of remarks by Rep. Chris Smith (R-NJ)
During press conference on the
Conscience Protection Act
November 8, 2017*

We are here today to call on our colleagues in Congress to demand that the the Conscience Protection Act is enacted into law this year.

It is an honor and privilege to join these “nurses of conscience” who believe that abortion kills children and harms women, and stood up for their beliefs at the risk of great personal sacrifice and injury – loss of job, demotion, or other forms of retaliation.

I am especially grateful that we have this opportunity to recognize the courage shown by Cathy DeCarlo, Sandra Mendoza, and Fe Vinoya.

Cathy DeCarlo was ordered by Mount Sinai Hospital in New York to assist in the abortion of a 22 week old unborn child. As Cathy will share, this order contradicted her belief that abortion is wrong.

For years, she has fought to assert her federal conscience rights. She was turned away by the Federal District Court. For over two years, her pleas to HHS Office of Civil Rights (OCR), under President Obama, fell on deaf ears.

Sandra Mendoza lost her job after eighteen years because her conscience would not allow her to assist or refer for abortions.

Fe Vinoya is from my home state of New Jersey. She was informed by the Same Day Surgery Unit in University Hospital in Newark, where she worked, that the rules had been changed and all nurses in her unit were required to assist with abortions. Fe and her pro-life coworkers were told that, if they failed to comply, they would lose their jobs. The Alliance Defending Freedom took their case, and I

advocated for them as well to ensure that they were treated justly. A settlement in their favor was announced days before their court date.

Healthcare is about saving life, eradicating disease, mitigating disability —not taking life. At the very least, health care providers should have the right to not be coerced into facilitating abortion.

Coercive anti-conscience policies are not only highly unethical but blatantly illegal. The law couldn't be clearer on this matter.

Cathy, Sandra and Fe should have been protected through the Weldon Amendment, a law that prohibits discrimination against health care providers who refuse to participate in abortion.

But the Obama Administration chose not to enforce the law.

These nurses suffered discrimination because they recognize the innate value, dignity and preciousness of the unborn child and refused to be complicit in an act of violence against a vulnerable child.

They suffered because they have deep religious and moral convictions and believe women deserve better than abortion.

They suffered because they are compassionate and care deeply for every human life, regardless of age or condition of dependence.

And these courageous women had no recourse against this unjust discrimination.

That should never be the case again. And that is why we are here today.

The Conscience Protection Act of 2016 authored by Congresswoman Diane Black and Senator James Lankford seeks to end discrimination against people, plans and providers for choosing not to be involved in abortion. It establishes a private right of action for victims of abortion discrimination. It ensures that they have their day in court.

It's time for us to finally pass this law to give health care providers this common sense, actionable recourse against discrimination. No one should be forced to participate in abortion. No one. The House has passed this bill - President Trump has committed to sign this bill into law – this is the year to make it happen.