

Conscience rights and healthcare access

1. *Government and medical studies project that patients will experience a critical shortage of physicians:*
 - **65 million people** lack adequate access to primary care physicians.¹
 - They live in over 6,000 Primary Care Health Professional Shortage Areas, according to the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA).
 - It would take 16,585 practitioners to meet their need for primary care providers.
 - **50 medical studies** have projected critical shortages of physicians.²
 - One study projects a shortage of 90,000 to 200,000 physicians by 2020 and predicts that average wait times for medical specialties will increase dramatically.³
 - “If physician supply and use patterns stay the same, the United States will experience a shortage of 124,000 full-time physicians by 2025,” concludes a report by the American Association of Medical Colleges.⁴
 - 45% of doctors listed Congress passing health care overhaul a potential reason for quitting medicine.⁵
2. *Risking the loss of faith-based professionals by weakening conscience protections risks access for millions of patients:*
 - “**One in eight hospitals** in the U.S. is affiliated with the Catholic Church; they employ more than 750,000 people and handle 16% of hospital admissions.”⁶
 - “Each year, **one in six patients** in the U.S. is cared for in a Catholic hospital.”⁷
 - Polling⁸ evidences an access crisis if faith-based healthcare professionals lose conscience protections:
 - Nine of ten faith-based physicians agreed, “I would rather **stop practicing** medicine altogether than be forced to violate my conscience.”
 - 32% of faith-based healthcare professionals report having “been pressured to refer a patient for a procedure to which [they] had moral, ethical, or religious objections.”
 - 20% of faith-based **medical students** say they are “not pursuing a career in Obstetrics or Gynecology” because of perceived discrimination and coercion in that field.

¹ “Shortage Designation: HPSAs, MUAs & MUPs,” HRSA web site <http://bhpr.hrsa.gov/shortage/>

² “Recent Studies and Reports on Physician Shortages in the U.S.,” Association of American Medical Colleges, April 2009. <http://www.aamc.org/workforce/stateandspecialty/recentworkforcestudies.pdf>

³ Merritt, J., J. Hawkins, et al. (2004). “Will the Last Physician In America Please Turn Off The Lights? A Look at America's Looming Doctor Shortage.” Irving, TX, Practice Support Resources, Inc. For a summary of this study and book, see http://www.aameda.org/MemberServices/Exec/Bookreviews/spg05/Will_the_Last_Physician_in_America.pdf

⁴ “The Complexities of Physician Supply and Demand: Projections Through 2025,” AAMC report, October 2008. https://services.aamc.org/publications/index.cfm?fuseaction=Product.displayForm&prd_id=244

⁵ “45% Of Doctors Would Consider Quitting If Congress Passes Health Care Overhaul,” *Investor's Business Daily*, Posted 09/15/2009 07:09 PM ET. <http://www.investors.com/NewsAndAnalysis/Article.aspx?id=506199>

⁶ “Health-Care Overhaul Creates Dilemma for Some Catholics,” *Wall Street Journal*, August 5, 2009.

⁷ “Catholic Health Care in the U.S.” - January 2011 report. <http://www.chausa.org/WorkArea/linkit.aspx?LinkIdentifier=id&ItemID=2147489259>

⁸ On behalf of the Christian Medical Association, The polling companyTM, inc./ WomanTrend conducted an online survey of members of faith-based organizations, fielded March 31, 2009 to April 3, 2009. It was completed by 2,865 faith-based healthcare professionals. http://www.freedom2care.org/docLib/200905011_Pollingsummaryhandout.pdf

