

# 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.<sup>1</sup>
    - 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.<sup>2</sup>
    - 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.<sup>3</sup>
    - “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.<sup>4</sup>
  - 45% of doctors listed Congress passing health care overhaul a potential reason for quitting medicine.<sup>5</sup>
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.”<sup>6</sup>
  - “Each year, **one in six patients** in the U.S. is cared for in a Catholic hospital.”<sup>7</sup>
  - Polling<sup>8</sup> 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.

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

<sup>2</sup> “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>

<sup>3</sup> 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](http://www.aameda.org/MemberServices/Exec/Bookreviews/spg05/Will_the_Last_Physician_in_America.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> “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](https://services.aamc.org/publications/index.cfm?fuseaction=Product.displayForm&prd_id=244)

<sup>5</sup> “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>

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

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

<sup>8</sup> 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](http://www.freedom2care.org/docLib/200905011_Pollingsummaryhandout.pdf)



