



The Colorado Health Foundation™

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Office for Civil Rights  
Attention: Conscience NPRM, RIN 0945-ZA03  
Hubert H. Humphrey Building  
Room 509F  
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20201

**RE: Public Comment in Response to the Proposed Regulation, Protecting Statutory Conscience Rights in Health Care RN 0945-ZA03**

To U.S. Department of Health and Human Services:

The Colorado Health Foundation is grateful for the opportunity to provide comments on the Department's proposed rule relating to the protection of conscience rights in health care. We firmly believe that religious freedom is a fundamental American value, but we urge the Department not to enact this proposed rule because we are concerned that the exemptions it would allow will ultimately obstruct access to vital health care services Coloradans need. The Colorado Health Foundation is the third largest health foundation in the country and is dedicated to a mission of improving the health of Coloradans. One of the focus areas of our work is creating equity in access to and use of high quality, comprehensive primary care. We believe that quality healthcare should be within reach for every Coloradan.

Unfortunately, many vulnerable Coloradans already face enormous barriers to getting the care they need. Accessing quality, culturally competent care is a challenge particularly for those living in areas with limited access to health providers or who may encounter bias or discrimination in healthcare settings because of their personal characteristics or the types of care they are seeking. Patients living in less densely populated areas already face a myriad of barriers to obtaining care including fewer options for health insurance coverage, narrower provider networks, lower incomes, and lower rates of paid sick leave. This is in addition to the high costs of transportation, the challenges of taking time away from work, school, or family, and other barriers that go along with obtaining care. For many, the sheer distance to a health care facility can be a daunting challenge. This means that the potential for a healthcare provider to turn away or refuse treatment could add yet another obstacle to receiving care for many Coloradans. It is not acceptable for a patient to be denied necessary care and medication

1780 Pennsylvania Street, Denver, CO 80203

P 303-953-3600 F 303-322-4576

[www.coloradohealth.org](http://www.coloradohealth.org)



by providers or denied coverage for procedures by institutions on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, family structure or type of procedure.

We strongly urge the Department not to proceed with this proposal. The broad and vague language in this proposed rule creates a scenario in which courts around the country could be flooded with time consuming and expensive litigation to clarify the legal ambiguity it would create. The Colorado Health Foundation believes having access to high quality and culturally competent care is crucially important for bringing health in reach for all Coloradans. **We urge the Department to withdraw this proposed rule because of the negative consequences it could have on Coloradans' ability to receive needed care.**

We thank you for your consideration of our comments. If you have any questions, please contact Sara Monge, policy officer at the Colorado Health Foundation at [smonge@coloradohealth.org](mailto:smonge@coloradohealth.org) or 303-953-3664.

Sincerely,



Kyle Legleiter  
Senior Policy Director  
The Colorado Health Foundation