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February 9, 2012

The Honorable Kathleen Sebelius Secretary U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 200 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Sebelius:

On behalf of the American Nurses Association, the only full service professional nursing organization representing the interests of the nation's 3.1 million nurses, I write to applaud your recent decision to ensure women with health insurance coverage will have access to the full range of the Institute of Medicine's recommended preventive services, including all FDA-approved forms of contraception.

Family planning services are vital for women's health and well-being especially the two-thirds of American women who wish to avoid or postpone pregnancy. Your decision to not broaden the religious exemption beyond church-sponsored plans affirms that a woman's access to needed care, including contraception and other preventive care, should not depend on her employer type.

As health care providers, nurses have a long and proud history of support for a fair and equitable health care delivery system in which all Americans have access to basic health services, including services related to reproductive health. The foundation of such a system rests on the broader social rights of privacy, free speech, freedom of choice, confidentiality between client and provider, and equity of access to essential service.

ANA commends your leadership and fully supports your decision to ensure full access to meaningful health insurance which includes women's preventive health services including coverage of all family planning services and contraception.

Sincerely,

Rose Iris Gonzalez, PhD, MPS, RN

Director, Government Affairs