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March 20, 2015

The United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators,

We write in strong support of Congressional efforts to rescind the District of Columbia's Reproductive Health Non-Discrimination Amendment Act and Human Rights Amendment Act.

Both D.C. acts violate the freedom of religion, freedom of speech, and freedom of association protected by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, as well as by the Religious Freedom Restoration Act and other federal laws.

The Reproductive Health Non-Discrimination Amendment Act (RHNDA) prevents religious institutions, faith-based organizations, and pro-life advocacy organizations from making employment decisions consistent with their sincerely held beliefs. For example, they could be forced to hire, retain and promote individuals whose public speech and conduct contradicts their missions. They may also be forced to subsidize elective abortions through their employee health plans, a result which would violate the Hyde/Weldon amendment approved every year by Congress as part of the Labor/HHS appropriations act.

The Human Rights Amendment Act (HRAA) repeals the Nation's Capital Religious Liberty and Academic Freedom Act (also known as the "Armstrong Amendment" after Senator William Armstrong) passed by Congress in 1989 and made part of the District of Columbia code. Importantly, the Armstrong Amendment ensures that the D.C. Human Rights Act cannot be construed to require religiously affiliated schools to officially endorse, fund, or provide other assistance for the promotion of human sexuality or sexual conduct contrary to the schools' faith and moral beliefs. Although there are different beliefs regarding human sexuality and sexual conduct, religiously-affiliated educational institutions ought not be forced under penalty of law to support beliefs contrary to their teachings.

In effect, both RHNDA and HRAA would compel religious institutions, faith-based organizations, and pro-life advocacy organizations to engage in certain behavior that seems intended to drive these institutions and organizations out of the District of Columbia.

We note that the Archdiocese of Washington and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops are among the major institutions that could be severely impacted by these measures.

Accordingly it is imperative that Congress take action against government coercion that would undermine our cherished freedoms, especially here in our Nation's Capital.

We urge you and your colleagues to swiftly exercise Congressional authority to rescind RHNDA and HRAA.

Sincerely,



Donald Cardinal Wuerl
Archbishop of Washington



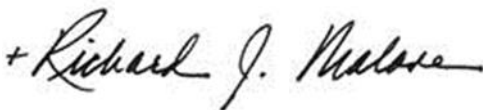
Most Reverend William Lori
Archbishop of Baltimore
Chairman, Ad Hoc Committee
for Religious Liberty
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Seán Cardinal O'Malley
Archbishop of Boston
Chairman, Committee on
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Most Reverend George J. Lucas
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Most Reverend Richard J. Malone
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Most Reverend Salvatore J. Cordileone
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Chairman, Subcommittee for the Promotion
and Defense of Marriage
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