



## Committee for Religious Liberty

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Most Reverend Joseph E. Kurtz  
Archbishop of Louisville  
*Chairman*

June 24, 2019

The Honorable Bobby Scott  
Chairman  
Committee on Education and Labor  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Virginia Foxx  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Education and Labor  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Scott and Ranking Member Foxx:

I am writing as chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) Committee for Religious Liberty to express our steadfast support for the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA), which passed with nearly unanimous bipartisan support in 1993, and to express our alarm at recent attempts to strip away the fundamental guarantees of this longstanding federal law, which protects conscience rights and religious liberty.

The misnamed “Do No Harm Act” (H.R. 1450), for example, would eviscerate RFRA when it comes to “access to, information about, referrals for, provision of, or coverage for, any health care item or service,” which could include things like abortion, contraception, sterilization, or so-called “gender transition” procedures. Hence, the federal government could run roughshod over the religious freedom and conscience rights of Americans—including doctors, nurses, and other healthcare professionals—regarding the provision of health care or health coverage. The bill would also target faith-based nonprofits that partner with the federal government to provide critical social services to people in need, as the bill erases the application of RFRA from “a government contract, grant, cooperative agreement, or other award.”

As a broad, interfaith coalition of religious leaders has explained, “Congress has *never* passed legislation with the specific purpose of *reducing* Americans’ religious freedom. It should not consider doing so now.”<sup>1</sup>

In short, we urge Congress to uphold our nation’s commitment to religious liberty, as enshrined in the Constitution and in the federal Religious Freedom Restoration Act. The mere introduction of legislation like the “Do No Harm Act” calls into question

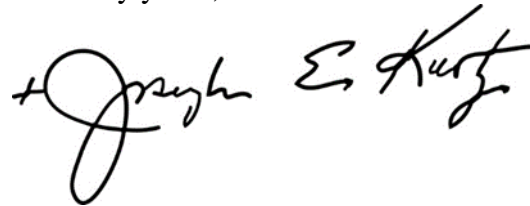
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<sup>1</sup> USCCB President, *Diverse Religious Leaders Come Together to Urge Congress to Protect Religious Freedom Restoration Act*, July 1, 2014: <http://www.usccb.org/news/2014/14-117.cfm>

Congress's honoring its obligation to ensure the fundamental rights of religious freedom and conscience.

We oppose H.R. 1450 and any legislation that repeals or weakens the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. We urge you to reject these proposals.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Joseph E. Kurtz". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and a distinct "E".

Most Reverend Joseph E. Kurtz, D.D.  
Archbishop of Louisville  
Chairman, USCCB Committee for Religious Liberty