

Will Doctors be Forced to Perform Abortions Against Their Will?

Imagine if your job could force you to murder an innocent person.

Recently we told you that the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) proposed a rule to protect that fundamental medical principle called “Protecting Statutory Conscience Rights in Health Care.” The rule ensures “that persons or entities are not subjected to certain practices or policies that violate conscience, coerce, or discriminate, in violation of such Federal laws.”

Although this would be a huge win for the pro-life movement here at home, medical associations in other countries are considering a decidedly different, unsettling direction for medical professionals.

The World Medical Association (WMA)—the international organization representing physicians and cooperating with the World Health Organization (WHO)—is close to adopting a new text that would contradict its established missions and goals.

The WMA was created with the expressed intent “to ensure the independence of physicians, and to work for the highest possible standards of ethical behavior and care by physicians, at all times.”

At their recent WMA Council Session in Latvia a proposal entitled “Declaration on Medically-Indicated Abortion” was discussed, that suggested disturbing revisions to their ethical policy statements.

Under these proposed changes, a physician could actually be

forced to cooperate in, if not actually perform abortion procedures, even if it was against their will. Not only would the rights of innocent unborn babies be disregarded, but doctors who currently have the right to choose not to perform abortions without consequences to their practice would be forced to commit murder.

Our European office, the European Center for Law and Justice (ECLJ), is actively involved in this situation. The ECLJ sent a letter to all members of the WMA, imploring them to “oppose the draft Declaration and to instead reassert the obligation of the States to guarantee the independence of physicians and to protect human life.” As stated in the letter:

According to its own website, the WMA was created to “ensure the independence of physicians” and it “has and continues to extend its help and influence on behalf of physicians who are being hindered in applying ethical practices.” That is why, the WMA has always considered that coercion is not legitimate to impose to physicians a collaboration on some practices violating their conscience.

The letter went on to point out this declaration would result in a direct violation of their rights as doctors to refuse to perform or participate in procedures they don’t personally agree with:

[T]he proposal of a new “Declaration on Medically-Indicated Abortion” sets out some exceptions in which physicians would be forced to refer women to professionals performing abortions or even to perform abortions themselves. This endorsement of a coercion of physicians by the states violates their independence and their freedom of conscience.

It is a slippery slope to allow medical associations to force physicians to act against their own consciences under any circumstance. Aside from violating their rights, it could compromise safety for the patient, particularly if the

physician is forced into an unfamiliar procedure. Under this declaration, it would be guaranteed that someone would not leave the operating room alive.

At the ACLJ, we're fighting for the free speech of pro-life advocates Big Abortion is trying to silence. We've taken on more than half a dozen massive pro-life cases across the country, each of which could end up at the Supreme Court. We have a chance to cripple Big Abortion, cut their funding and save countless innocent babies.

No doctor should be forced to violate his own conscience and take an innocent life. We will continue to monitor this WMA proposal and are prepared to take further legal action if necessary. {eo}

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