

Vanderbilt University Forces Abortion Pledge

Vanderbilt University is requiring nursing residents to take part in abortions—whether it harms their conscience or not.

The Alliance Defense Fund filed a complaint on Tuesday with the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) against Vanderbilt University for this action. Vanderbilt receives more than \$300 million in federal tax dollars each year, and federal law prohibits grant recipients from forcing students or health care workers to participate in abortions contrary to their religious beliefs or moral convictions.

ADF attorneys filed the complaint on behalf of a fourth-year nursing student at another university who wants to apply to Vanderbilt's nurse residency program. The student is unable to apply because the admission forms require her to promise to participate in abortions.

"Christians and other pro-life members of the medical community shouldn't be forced to participate in abortions to pursue their profession," says ADF Legal Counsel Matt Bowman. "People enter the medical profession to protect and heal the helpless. Federal law protects them from being required to kill the helpless. The law clearly states that grant recipients cannot accept taxpayer dollars and require health care workers to participate in abortions, which is precisely what Vanderbilt is doing."

Vanderbilt's nurse residency application states, "If you are chosen for the Nurse Residency Program in the Women's Health track, you will be expected to care for women undergoing termination of pregnancy. Procedures performed in the Labor and Delivery unit include "terminations of pregnancy." If you feel you cannot provide care to women during this type of

event, we encourage you to apply to a different track of the Nurse Residency Program to explore opportunities that may best fit your skills and career goals.

In a letter accompanying the complaint, the ADF said that because the deadline for Vanderbilt's nurse residency applications is January 28, 2011, it is imperative that HHS immediately act to prohibit Vanderbilt from rejecting or discriminating against nurse residency applicants' who do not wish to promise that they will assist abortions.

The ADF letter further stated that the student filing the complaint "can and is prepared to submit all that the application requires and to fulfill all of the program's requirements, except only that she has a religious objection to participating in abortions and to promising to do so by signing the application's letter."

"We repeatedly see universities and other users of taxpayer dollars tell students and staff that they must submit to the institution's preferred ideology or take a hike," says ADF Senior Counsel David French. "What many of these institutions truly want—besides money—are people who share their leftist political and social views."

ADF is currently litigating several cases involving Christians required to act against their conscience, including a nurse forced to assist in an abortion procedure at New York's Mt. Sinai Hospital, a student rejected from Eastern Michigan University's counseling program because she would not agree to affirm homosexual behavior as morally acceptable, and a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention counselor fired because she would not provide counseling that would directly affirm or promote behavior contrary to her religious beliefs.