

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

July 8, 2009

The Honorable David Obey  
Chairman  
Appropriations Committee  
H-218, The Capitol

Dear Mr. Chairman:

As you prepare to mark up a Labor/Health and Human Services/Education appropriations bill for Fiscal Year 2010, we hope you will give your personal attention to the need for continued strong protection of conscience rights in health care.

Since 2004, the Weldon amendment has prevented federal agencies, and state and local government bodies receiving federal funds, from discriminating against individual or institutional health care entities that decline participation in abortion. Although the Weldon amendment has been criticized by some, it has never been shown to cause significant problems or conflicts for state laws or health care systems. We believe retaining this amendment as it exists in current law is good policy, and will help to avoid reopening a well settled, but emotionally charged, issue at the very time Congress is working to build a broad consensus for needed health care reform.

In his recent speech at the University of Notre Dame, President Obama focused specifically on the need to “honor the conscience of those who disagree with abortion” as part of a necessary common ground on an issue often seen as divisive. He has reinforced this commitment by including the language of the Weldon amendment without change in his FY2010 budget submission to the Congress.

We believe it is especially important to keep this policy intact this year, as we are making a concerted effort to pass much-needed health care reform. It is a challenging task to develop the broad based support needed to enact meaningful reform. In this process, reopening settled issues such as the longstanding conscience protections in health care could only further complicate the health care debate.

We appreciate the challenge you face in marking up a Labor/HHS appropriations bill this year. Please know that you will have our support and cooperation in bringing forward an appropriations bill that retains the Weldon amendment, which we believe is vitally important to the continued full participation of many dedicated professionals in our health care system.

Sincerely,



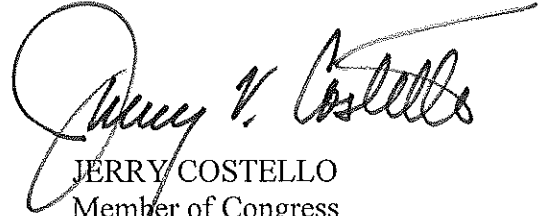
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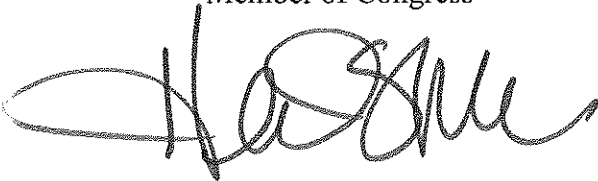
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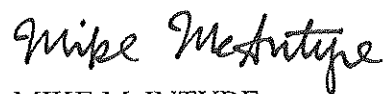
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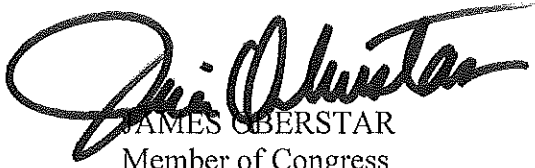
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