



The following faith-focused talking points were developed by Faith for Equality working group, a diverse coalition of religious leaders, organizations, and advocates committed to advancing the rights of LGBTQ Americans through the passage of the Equality Act. For more information, please contact Maggie Siddiqi (msiddiqi@americanprogress.org) or Katy Joseph (kjoseph@interfaithalliance.org).

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About the Proposed Rule

On November 1, the Trump Administration announced it will stop enforcing Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) regulations that prohibit discrimination in HHS-funded programs based on sexual orientation, gender identity, sex, or religion. The federal government is now collecting comments from the public as they decide whether to remove these protections for good.

Programs funded by the Department of Health and Human Services serve millions of families across the U.S. and are vitally important to their health and well-being. While some programs within HHS have their own non-discrimination standards, this proposed rule would remove the canopy of protections that apply to \$500 billion of grant-funded programs per year.

Our taxpayer dollars should never be used to discriminate or hurt the most vulnerable among us—and that's exactly what this rule would do. These talking points are designed to help people of faith connect their personal values with opposition to this rule.

General Faith-Based Talking Points

- Across faith traditions, we are called to care for the least among us – the hungry, the poor, those in need of shelter. From senior centers to Head Start, HHS programs are there to meet the needs of countless families and individuals in our communities.
- HHS administers over \$500 billion each year to protect and preserve the health and human dignity of millions of Americans. We cannot allow our neighbors to be turned away from these vital services simply because of who they love, who they are, or what they believe.
- As a [religious affiliation], my sacred tradition teaches that every person is created with equal dignity and worth. When we exclude or reject someone simply because of who they are, we fail to honor the divine spark that lives within them.
- As people of faith, we have an obligation to participate in healing the world. This proposed rule would only cause further harm by placing vital services out of reach for millions of Americans who are already struggling.
- Millions of Americans participate in HHS programs every year. These are our family members, friends, congregants, and neighbors who may be turned away from HIV testing and prevention, Head Start programs, foster care services, health care and more—services that all of our families need to survive and thrive.



Protecting Religious Freedom

- Religious freedom is a core American value. As a person of faith, I have the freedom to believe as I choose and participate in [religious affiliation] communal life. But I also recognize that, for my neighbors to believe as they choose, I don't have the right to impose my beliefs on others.
- Religious freedom and non-discrimination laws are rooted in complimentary, not contradictory, ideas. When we respect the moral autonomy of every person to believe as they choose and live as their most authentic selves, we embody the notion of doing unto others as we would have done to us.
- Faith-based organizations play an essential role in providing social services, often with HHS funding. To meet the challenges facing our communities, these services must be available to any eligible person in need. Agencies that receive government money to serve the public shouldn't get to pick and choose who they will serve.
- Discrimination is not religious freedom. We lament the ways that religion has been used throughout our nation's history to justify discrimination, including on the basis of race. We refuse to be complicit in attempts to use religion to marginalize LGBTQ+ and other impacted communities.

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