

WASHINGTON--National Health Law Program (NHeLP) executive director Emily Spitzer issued the following statement in response to the Obama Administration's new rules governing access to birth control for employers objecting to this coverage.

"Contraception is basic health care for women and plays a critical role in preventing and planning pregnancy, as well as helping women to manage their health. Today's announcement is largely a victory for women who have been fighting alongside health advocates for the past two years while employers threatened to deny women coverage for birth control in the courts and as lawmakers attacked and resisted implementation. No employer should be able to make personal health care decisions for their employees, including whether or when a woman is able to access birth control.

The passage of the Affordable Care Act was a giant step forward for women's health, including the promise that cost would no longer be a barrier to birth control - a critical win for women. The new rules reflect the administration's intention to deliver on that promise. However, by separating birth control coverage from the rest of health insurance, the new rules raise serious concerns about how they will be implemented while creating serious roadblocks that prevent women from accessing the services to which they are legally entitled.

NHeLP is committed to working with the administration to ensure that the new rules maximize access for women, particularly lower income women, and will continue to provide comments and guidance."

Objections by religious institutions, providers and employers threaten women's health and stand in the way of them accessing the health services they need in a safe and timely manner. Documented in NHeLP's report, [Health Care Refusals: Undermining Quality Care for Women](#) , medical standards of care require that providers offer women with certain health conditions, such as heart disease, diabetes and other chronic conditions, information and services necessary to prevent pregnancy. Religious objections to covering contraception conflict with these professionally developed and accepted medical standards of care and have adverse health consequences for women and their families.