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Catholic Benefits Association files suit seeking relief from HHS mandate

*Association comprised of nearly 200 Catholic employers,
including dioceses, ministries and businesses seeking to protect their free exercise of religion*

OKLAHOMA CITY (March 12, 2014) – The Catholic Benefits Association (CBA), representing nearly 200 Catholic employers and 19,000 employees nationwide, filed a lawsuit in the United States District Court for the Western District of Oklahoma earlier today to stop the mandate by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) that would force the faith-based employers to violate their religiously-held beliefs and the teachings of the Catholic Church by providing health insurance coverage for surgical sterilizations, contraceptive drugs and abortion-inducing drugs so as to be in compliance with the Affordable Care Act.

The filing asks the court to protect the CBA members' free exercise of religion by allowing the employer-members to opt out of the HHS mandate's coverage requirement.

The plaintiffs in the lawsuit include The Catholic Benefit Association, The Catholic Insurance Company, The Archdiocese of Oklahoma City, Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City, Inc., All Saints Catholic School in Oklahoma, Archbishop William E. Lori and the Archdiocese of Baltimore, The Cathedral Foundation in Baltimore, Villa St. Francis Catholic Care Center in Kansas City, Kan., and Good Will Publishers in North Carolina.

While Catholic dioceses and archdioceses are themselves exempt from the mandate, their Catholic affiliates that are separately incorporated, such as high schools and charitable institutions, are not. Other Catholic ministries—including hospitals and colleges -- and Catholic businesses have also been ordered by the government to comply.

"We as Catholics – regardless of the corporate structure within which we work – cannot in good conscience provide employees with insurance that covers contraception, abortifacients and sterilization, which undermine the dignity of the human person and the sanctity of human life and also jeopardize the physical and mental health of those who use them," said the Most Rev. Paul S. Coakley, Archbishop of Oklahoma City. "It is my prayer that the courts will recognize that the federal government has no compelling public interest that justifies burdening our free exercise of religion by requiring us to pay for or provide conscience-violating drugs and procedures."

The CBA is an association of Catholic employers united and committed in their defense of their First Amendment right to give witness to their Catholic faith, through their ministries and businesses, by providing their employees with life-affirming health care coverage that is consistent with Catholic teaching. There are nearly 200 Catholic employers and some 1,000 parishes from around the United States in the association. They include Catholic dioceses and archdioceses, religious orders, local Catholic Charities, colleges, nursing homes, cemeteries, retreat centers and medical facilities. The Catholic Benefits Association serves both non-profit ministries and for-profit businesses.

The CBA also makes it possible for Catholic employers — both nonprofit and for-profit — to exercise their religious values through the health coverage they provide to their employees. To accomplish this, the CBA has formed a wholly-owned subsidiary, The Catholic Insurance Company (CIC) and arranged for health provider networks to as-

sist Catholic employers in providing comprehensive, quality health care that honors the dignity of the human person. The CBA also provides vigorous defense of its members' First Amendment religious liberty regarding such coverage. More information about the Catholic Benefits Association is available at www.lifeaffirmingcare.com.

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The Archdiocese of Oklahoma City is the Catholic Church in central and western Oklahoma. Our sacred purpose, as the people of the archdiocese, is to joyfully witness to our Catholic faith through the teaching, sanctifying, and governing ministry of Christ and His Church so that the Body of Christ is made present, the universal call to holiness proclaimed and all people are welcomed into the promise of eternal life.