

NEWS

www.diopitt.org

Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh
111 Boulevard of the Allies
Pittsburgh PA 15222

E-mail: dioceseofpittsburghcommunications@diopitt.org

For Release: October 17, 2017

**Contact: Rev. Msgr. Ronald P. Lengwin
(412)456-3021 (office)**

Bishop David Zubik on the resolution of Zubik v. Burwell

I am grateful to God that we have reached an agreement with the government that secures and reaffirms the constitutional right of religious freedom. The Diocese of Pittsburgh's 5-year challenge to the HHS mandate provisions of the Affordable Care Act has been resolved successfully. Our Catholic Charities and other religious organizations of different denominations will not be required to facilitate insurance coverage or practices that are morally unacceptable to them.

The settlement follows the recent release of new federal regulations that provide religious organizations with a full exemption from covering items that violate their core beliefs.

The Diocese of Pittsburgh joined more than 70 religious organizations represented by the law firm of Jones Day in filing an initial challenge to the government's regulations in May 2012. The diocese objected to the government's definition of a religious organization. The federal government had exempted houses of worship from covering morally objectionable items in their health insurance plans but insisted that other religious institutions which are not houses of worship must facilitate such coverage against their sincerely held beliefs. This rule was based on the faulty premise that religious organizations, such as Catholic Charities, were not religious enough to qualify for the exemption. We are gratified that the settlement has eliminated a new and dangerous distinction between houses of worship and religious institutions.

This settlement restores religious freedom guaranteed by the First Amendment. Our litigation sought to re-establish the cornerstone principle that freedom of religion means freedom to practice our faith in daily life, not just in worship and prayer.

On the other hand, this agreement does not prohibit the government from providing contraceptives. But it does prohibit the government and others from using church-related insurance plans as a conduit for such coverage.

This has been a long legal and spiritual battle. I am grateful to the many religious organizations across the country who courageously took up this cause. Throughout these five years, I have prayed that our country would continue to uphold and respect religious freedom. My prayer continues that together we may protect the lives and rights of all human beings.