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2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5074
FACSIMILE (202) 225-3974
MINORITY (202) 225-5051

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Opening Statement
Rep. Elijah E. Cummings, Ranking Member

Hearing on “Lines Crossed: Separation of Church and State. Has the Obama Administration Trampled on Freedom of Religion and Freedom of Conscience?”

February 16, 2012

As the son of two ministers from a small church in Baltimore, I understand the position of the religious community on this issue. I know—both through my faith and my legal training—that we have an obligation as a nation to make accommodations, where appropriate, to avoid undue interference with the practice of religion.

But there is another core interest we must consider, and that is the interest of women. The pill has had a profound impact on their well-being—far more than any man in this room can possibly know. It has allowed women to control their lives and make very personal decisions about how many children to have and when to have them.

I think everyone understands what is going on here today. The Chairman is promoting a conspiracy theory that the federal government is conducting a “war” against religion. He has stacked the hearing with witnesses who agree with his position. He has not invited the Catholic Health Association, Catholic Charities, Catholics United, or a host of other Catholic groups that praised the White House for making the accommodation they made last week.

He has also refused to allow a minority witness to testify about the interests of women who want safe and affordable coverage for basic preventive health care, including contraception.

In my opinion, this Committee commits a massive injustice by trying to pretend that the views of millions of women across this country are meaningless, or worthless, or irrelevant to this debate.

For these reasons, I yield the rest of my time to Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney.

Contact: Ashley Etienne, Communications Director, (202) 226-5181.

