

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE | February 27, 2017**  
**CONTACT: Louis Brown, Christ Medicus Foundation**  
517-974-0224 | [lbrown@christmedicus.org](mailto:lbrown@christmedicus.org)

## **Congress Must Include the Conscience Protection Act in Health Care Reform**

As the health care debate in Congress continues, the medical community, health care entities, and medical students want stronger permanent protections in federal law for conscience rights and religious freedom in health care.

“The right of conscience is the most fundamental principle upon which the American Republic was founded. If doctors are not free to serve their fellow citizens as their consciences dictate, freedom will not meaningfully exist in our nation. The right of conscience and religious freedom in health care is a vital principle that Congress must include in any House or Senate health care plan in this 115<sup>th</sup> Congress,” Louis Brown, director of the Christ Medicus Foundation CURO (CMF CURO) Catholic health care ministry, said.

As referenced in the newly introduced Conscience Protection Act of 2017, H.R. 664 in the House and S. 301 in the Senate, there are numerous precedents of Congress enacting laws to protect the rights of conscience in health care – including the Church Amendment, the Coats/Snowe Amendment, and the Hyde/Weldon Amendment. These laws, however, do not provide a private right of action for victims of discrimination who have had their right of conscience violated.

“The Christ Medicus Foundation urges the House and Senate to pass the Conscience Protection Act as a first step in this new session toward more robust federal protections of the right of conscience. The bill was passed in the House with bi-partisan support last summer in the prior Congressional session,” Mike O’Dea, executive director of the Christ Medicus Foundation, said.

“There is a groundswell of support for the Conscience Protection Act. Keep the momentum going and pass it into law,” O’Dea said.

The Conscience Protection Act of 2017 has been introduced in the House by Rep. Diane Black (R-TN-6) and cosponsored by 81 other Members of Congress. Senator James Lankford (R-OK) introduced the legislation in the Senate where it was cosponsored by 17 other Senators. The bill protects doctors, medical professionals, and health care entities from being discriminated by the federal, state, or local government for refusing to provide, pay for, refer, or otherwise facilitate an abortion. The legislation also gives a victim of such discrimination the right to sue in federal court.

*The Christ Medicus Foundation (CMF) is a Catholic 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to advancing Christ-centered Catholic health care. A program of the Christ Medicus Foundation, CMF CURO is a Catholic health care ministry that provides Catholics and all people of faith with affordable access to medical care that protects their religious liberty and the Gospel of Life based on Catholic teaching. As a member-representative to Samaritan Ministries International (SMI), CMF CURO is the first Catholic health sharing ministry in the nation. Visit [mycatholichealthcare.com](http://mycatholichealthcare.com) for more information.  
CMF CURO: It’s My Catholic Health Care!*