

April 16th, 2012

Dear President DeGioia:

Many students and alumni of Georgetown University take pride in the Catholic and Jesuit identity of this university. Central to this identity is a commitment to respecting the beliefs of all those who attend this great institution, irrespective of politics or religion. As men and women for others, we condemn the offensive comments made over the past few months against one of our fellow Hoyas and we thank you for your letter urging respectful, civil discourse. Such rhetoric contributes not only to the degeneration of civil discourse within society as a whole but also within this university's gates.

Nevertheless, the recent debate regarding the provision of contraceptive services to women by Catholic religious institutions has spurred misconceptions regarding Georgetown's insurance policy and warrants a clarification of issues, particularly because of comments made by Ms. Sandra Fluke in her testimony before the House Democratic Steering and Policy Committee. The primary issue is whether religious institutions such as Georgetown University should be mandated to provide contraceptive services. Many university students seem to be unaware of both the Catholic Church's teaching on providing hormonal prescriptions for medical conditions and the university's exception within its insurance policy for such conditions. It is important that students of this university are informed of these facts. If there have been incidents where female students have not received adequate medical care after following proper procedures in filling out a waiver for an exemption for such services, this is an independent matter that should be addressed.

In addition, recent activism on campus such as heightened requests to alter the university's policy on this issue, the presence of Planned Parenthood on campus, and pressure for the university to immediately implement coverage for contraception in Georgetown's Student Health Insurance Plan, foregoing the allowed extension until August 2013, have caused concern among many students and alumni who support the university's commitment to its Catholic identity. Particularly concerning is the fact that the university is providing a forum in Gaston Hall for Ms. Sandra Fluke to promote her views

which are contrary to Church teaching. If an equal opportunity is not provided for the virtues of the Church's teachings on sexuality and contraception to be presented, any hope of an adequately informed student body will be lost and we will have not achieved a true dialogue.

Many students, both male and female, choose to attend Georgetown University because of its Catholic and Jesuit identity. The university celebrates this commitment by supporting pregnant faculty and students with healthcare, housing, and resources. Furthermore, Georgetown supports students who are members of the Knights of Columbus, Catholic Daughters of the Americas, and Georgetown Right to Life, as well as the hundreds of pro-life students from around the country who gather for the Cardinal O'Connor Conference on Life held in Gaston Hall on the day before the March for Life. In addition, Nellie Gray (founder of the March for Life), Cardinal John J. O'Connor, (founder of the Sisters of Life), and Rep. Henry Hyde (crafter of the Hyde Amendment) are all alumni of the university. Students for Life of America, University Faculty for Life (founded by Fr. Thomas King, S.J.), and the College Pregnancy Resource Forum were all founded at Georgetown. Some students may choose to attend Georgetown precisely because of its commitment to Catholic teaching and its rich legacy in support of the pro-life movement.

Consequently, it would be prudent for the university to release a statement clarifying its position on this fundamental issue of debate so that all students are properly informed of both the details of the university's insurance policy and its commitment to this policy in light of Church teaching. At the least, a statement clarifying misconceptions should be made. Informed debate is healthy and can be productive, but debate unsupported by adequate knowledge can often result in emotional responses that are unproductive and lead to unnecessary division and misunderstanding. Faith and reason can only work together if students are adequately informed.

cc: Dr. James Welsh, Dr. Todd Olson, Dr. Jeanne Lord, Rev. Kevin O'Brien, S.J.

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Sincerely,
Concerned students and alumni of Georgetown University