



For Immediate Release

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### **Amida Care Condemns Trump Administration and HHS Steps that will Promote Discrimination, Limit Access to Health Care**

New York, NY (January 18, 2018) – Doug Wirth, president and CEO of [Amida Care](http://Amida Care), New York’s largest not-for-profit Medicaid Special Needs Health Plan (SNP), issued the following statement regarding the news of the new conscience and religious freedom division under the Health and Human Services Department (HHS) and that the Trump administration has taken new steps to protect health care workers who discriminate against individuals under the cover of religious or moral objections.

“It is hard enough for too many Americans to get their health needs met. Allowing health care workers who are biased, racist, homophobic, transphobic, or against women's reproductive rights to withhold health services will hurt our neighbors. It could even kill them. The impact of such a rule will affect us all.

As the president and CEO of Amida Care, New York’s largest not-for-profit Medicaid Special Needs Health Plan and of one of the few health insurance plans in the nation that provides quality, culturally competent health care to transgender individuals, people who live with HIV/AIDS, and the homeless, I know too well the devastating human and financial impacts of being unable to access care.

Transgender women, for example, already face staggering discrimination in health care. Nineteen percent report being refused treatment and 28 percent report being harassed in a doctor's office. As a result, many simply avoid care altogether. Regularly visiting a provider means fewer emergency room visits and hospitalizations – the most expensive form of health care delivery. This also has serious implications for the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Transgender women are 49 times more likely to be living with HIV than any other population. We need to build support for treating these women, not condone further discrimination. After all, we can prevent the spread of HIV, but only if people who are living with HIV or at risk get regular medical care and medication.

But, the formation of the conscience and religious freedom division isn’t just about giving health care workers the right to deny transgender individuals care. Citing religious objections, a health worker could deny care to a divorced individual, an obese person, or even someone with tattoos – since according to Biblical laws, all these are sins. On moral grounds, workers could deny care to an individual struggling with addiction, a smoker dying from lung cancer, or a drunk driver. Under the pretense of a moral objection, you could deny care to anyone and everyone.

When a person chooses a career in health care, they make a commitment to care for all those who need it. Doctors have the Hippocratic Oath, nurses have the Nightingale Pledge. HHS too has a moral obligation to all Americans.”

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Amida Care Inc. is a not-for-profit health plan that specializes in providing comprehensive health coverage and coordinated care to New Yorkers with chronic conditions, including HIV and behavioral health disorders, and people who are homeless or of transgender experience (regardless of HIV status). Amida Care has a wide network of health care providers throughout New York City and is the largest Medicaid Special Needs Health Plan (SNP) in New York State. For more information, visit [www.amidacareny.org](http://www.amidacareny.org).