

**Statement of the Catholic Healthcare Partnership of New Jersey and the
New Jersey Catholic Conference in opposition to Assembly Bill 992**

June 11, 2007

The Catholic HealthCare Partnership of New Jersey, representing the fifteen Catholic hospitals of New Jersey, and the New Jersey Catholic Conference, representing the Catholic Bishops of New Jersey join our collective voices in calling upon the members of the New Jersey General Assembly to vote “no” in respect to the Assembly Substitute for Assembly Bill 992.

The bill would prohibit a pharmacist from refusing to dispense a prescription solely on the grounds that the dispensing would contravene the pharmacist’s philosophical, moral or religious rights.

We oppose this bill because it violates the rights of conscience of pharmacists and their free exercise of religion.

We support the resolution of the New Jersey Pharmacists Association which “recognizes the individual pharmacist’s right to exercise conscientious refusal.” This right of refusal is also supported by the American Pharmaceutical Association.

For Americans, it has been unthinkable that a person be forced to act contrary to that person’s religious conscience especially when other options are available to satisfy an individual’s request. For example, in virtually every hospital, a physician, nurse, or other health care professional may decline to participate in medical interventions which are not in accordance with his/her sincerely held personal or professional convictions. In such case, the patient is transferred or referred for care.

Assembly Committee Substitute Bill 992 is a step backward which would, unfairly and unnecessarily, force pharmacists to choose between God and government. Vote No!