

RESOLUTION TITLE: Integrity of Religious Exemptions in Medical Coverage

RESOLVED, that the 230th Diocesan Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Rhode Island submit the following resolution to the 80th General Convention of the Episcopal Church meeting in 2022:

RESOLVED, the House of _____ concurring, that the 80th General Convention direct the Episcopal Church Medical Trust to ensure that all medical plans offered to participating dioceses are fully compliant with medical coverages mandated by the respective state laws; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Medical Trust shall publicly disclose any and all claims to religious exemption from any medical coverages; and be it further

RESOLVED, that such disclosure shall cite the relevant Act(s) of General Convention that substantiate such claims to religious exemption from any medical coverages; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Medical Trust shall not claim any religious exemption without relevant Act(s) of General Convention to substantiate said claim.

EXPLANATION: Many U.S. states across the Episcopal Church have enacted laws to mandate insurers cover a range of medical treatments, with exceptions for religious objection. A religious group may claim exemption from a mandate that contradicts or opposes the group's core beliefs and practices. Simply being religious does not entitle a group to a religious exemption. Misuse of religious exemption provisions jeopardizes their integrity and perhaps their longevity and renders participants in the Medical Trust's health plans complicit in that misuse. In the absence of genuine, documented religious objection, insurance coverages offered by the Medical Trust should conform to state laws.

One example of the issues giving rise to the Resolution concerns treatment for infertility. From its inception in 2009 through the end of 2014, the Episcopal Church Medical Trust's Denominational Health Plan did not include coverage for the treatment of infertility. The Medical Trust claimed religious exemption. This claim was made despite the absence of any official objection to infertility treatment made by General Convention. In fact, the General Convention meeting in 1982 explicitly approved of in vitro fertilization, a now common form of infertility treatment. The Medical Trust made a false claim to religious objection and benefited from exercising the religious exemption from covering infertility treatment.

Signed by The Rev'd Dr. Veronica Tierney

Signed by The Rev'd Meaghan Brower