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Contact: Doug Honig, ACLU-WA  
206-624-2184

## **Concerned Organizations Call on Governor to Enact Moratorium on Decisions about Hospital Mergers**

The ACLU of Washington and ten other civil rights and health care advocacy organizations are urging the Governor to take immediate action to protect Washingtonians' access to health care. In a letter to Gov. Inslee, they have asked him to enact a six-month moratorium on any decision by the State Department of Health on proposed or pending applications related to hospital ownership, operation, or management.

The letter states that “[p]atients are at risk of being denied medically appropriate health care due to the unprecedented number of medical facilities in Washington that are considering or are planning mergers with religious health care corporations. When such mergers take place, secular hospitals are required to follow religious doctrine, resulting in patient care dictated by someone else’s religious beliefs, not the patient’s needs or interests.”

The organizations also urged Gov. Inslee to conduct a statutorily required community health needs assessment that would provide an objective evaluation of such mergers’ impact on patients’ ability to access medically appropriate health care services and would provide policy guidance for the future.

The moratorium would give our state’s leaders an important opportunity to gather data and consider in-depth how these fast-moving transactions are changing the face of health care access in Washington. The moratorium and needs assessment together would provide an opportunity for our leaders to consider what safeguards are needed to ensure that all people in Washington can access medically appropriate health care.

The letter is attached. Signers include the ACLU of Washington, Aurora Medical Services, Compassion and Choices, Washington, Legal Voice, Mt. Baker Planned Parenthood, NARAL Pro-Choice Washington, Northwest Health Law Advocates, People for Healthcare Freedom, Planned Parenthood Votes Northwest, PFLAG Washington State Council, and Washington Women for Choice.

For more information about the issue, see [www.aclu-wa.org/myhealthcare](http://www.aclu-wa.org/myhealthcare).

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