College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario  
80 College Street  
Toronto, Ontario  
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Dear Members of the Consultations Committee:

Subject: Draft Policy: “Professional Obligations and Human Rights”.  
Policy Section: "Limiting Health Services for Legitimate Reasons"  
Article ii: "Moral or Religious Beliefs (ll. 156, 157)"

I am writing to you with grave concern regarding the content of your proposed draft policy on Professional Obligations and Human Rights" under the Policy Section: Limiting Health Services for Legitimate Reasons, Article ii: "Moral or Religious Beliefs (ll. 156,157) which says that

"Where physicians are unwilling to provide certain elements of care due to their moral or religious beliefs, an effective referral to another health care provider must be provided to the patient".

This draft does not address the fact that many of these same physicians will find the act of referral itself objectionable, as they consider it material cooperation with the act. In compelling physicians to refer, you are limiting their right to conscientious objection, and compelling the physician to violate his or her own conscience by being a participant in the very act, the very procedure, to which he or she objects in the first place.

I earnestly ask that physicians, as professionals, be allowed to respect their own consciences. Freedom of conscience is foundational to our free society and cannot be limited, even for the best of intentions.

If we coerce physicians into violating their consciences, we will inevitably erode the personal integrity which is the basis of the physician's relationship with their patients.

I ask you to revise the section "Where physicians are unwilling to provide certain elements of care due to their moral or religious beliefs, an effective referral to another health care provider must be provided to the patient" so that it defends the right to freedom of conscience for all physicians. The simple act of substituting the words "may be provided" for the words "must be provided" might suffice.