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What New York's non-discrimination order could mean for religious liberty

New York City, N.Y., Feb 9, 2018 / 05:00 am (CNA/EWTN News) -- New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo (D) has signed an [executive order](#) that bans the state from doing business with companies that “promote or tolerate” discrimination, a move that has some religious liberty advocates [crying foul](#).

In a press release about the executive order, Cuomo specifically cited the Trump administration's decision to rescind the HHS contraception mandate as one of his concerns. Cuomo said that with the executive order, New York would “further protect New Yorkers' civil rights” and that the state's various agencies will not do business with companies that either promote or tolerate discrimination against the LGBTQ community.

As of May 1, state agencies will be prevented from “entering into contracts with entities that have institutional policies or practices that fail to address the harassment and discrimination of individuals on the basis of their gender identity, transgender status, gender dysphoria or any of the other protected classes[...].”

Further, schools that “refuse to protect transgender students” will not be eligible for state funding.

Ed Mechmann, the director of public policy and the director of the safe environment programs in the Archdiocese of New York, said that while this executive order may sound unobjectionable on the surface, it could actually be used to trample religious liberty in the state.

Writing in his “Stepping out of the Boat” blog, Mechmann said that Cuomo effectively tipped his hand by including the HHS mandate in the press release for the executive order.

“By citing this completely irrelevant federal proposal, the press release inadvertently made clear that the Governor's new order is rooted in animosity towards religious freedom,” said Mechmann.

Mechmann disputed Cuomo's claim that the removal of the HHS mandate has caused businesses to “claim broad exemptions from nondiscrimination laws,” which in turn has “increased the vulnerability of LGBTQ rights.”

“The idea that 'LGBTQ rights' might be 'vulnerable' (whatever that means) because of a decision relating to health insurance coverage of contraceptives is something that only an ideologue could believe,” he added.

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