



*(Alexia Palma and her pet Chihuahua, Chiclets. Photo credit: First Liberty Institute. May be republished. Access full resolution photos at [FirstLiberty.org/Palma](http://FirstLiberty.org/Palma) under the "Photos" tab)*

## **YOUNG CATHOLIC IMMIGRANT FILES CHARGE ALLEGING RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION**

*Houston health care company fires Alexia Palma for being unwilling to promote  
contraception*

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**Houston, Texas** – Today, on behalf of its client, Alexia Palma, First Liberty Institute filed a legal complaint with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) charging Palma's former employers, Legacy Community Health (LCH), with religious discrimination. In the complaint, Palma, a young Catholic woman, says that her employers fired her after she requested a simple religious accommodation from a task that constituted less than 2% of her job.

[Read the EEOC Charge](#)

Palma worked as a health educator at LCH, a clinic for low-income patients in Houston's inner city.

"I emigrated from Guatemala to America as a child," Palma said. "Finding this job, where I could serve those in need in my community, was my American dream come true. "

As a health educator, Palma taught many classes, but only one conflicted with her religious beliefs: the class on contraception. Because of her Catholic faith, Palma requested a simple religious accommodation – to be able to show a video on birth control instead of personally advocating for contraception. Her supervisors agreed, and the arrangement worked well for a year and a half.

In June 2016, after Palma was placed under new management, she was called into a meeting with company executives. Ms. Amy Leonard, the Vice President of the Public Health Department at LCH, gave Palma an ultimatum – “put aside” her religious beliefs or be terminated.

Palma reminded Ms. Leonard that teaching the birth control class was less than 2% of her job. She requested an accommodation to allow her to continue showing the video or to allow another employee, who had volunteered to teach the class, to substitute teach the class for her. LCH refused her accommodation request and she was terminated.

“I really loved my job and my patients, but I couldn’t do what the company was asking,” Palma says. “Through my difficult childhood of abuse and abandonment, God has always been faithful to me, so I must be faithful to him. My faith comes first.”

“The company gave Alexia an ultimatum – violate your faith or be fired,” Jeremy Dys, Senior Counsel for First Liberty Institute, the religious freedom law firm representing Palma, says. “That’s a violation of federal law and it is blatant religious discrimination.”

On December 21, First Liberty Institute filed an official charge with the EEOC on behalf of Palma, alleging that LCH engaged in religious discrimination.

“No one should be fired over their religious beliefs,” Dys says.

Read more and view legal documents at [FirstLiberty.org/Palma](http://FirstLiberty.org/Palma)

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### **About First Liberty Institute**

[First Liberty Institute](http://FirstLiberty.org) is the largest legal organization in the nation dedicated exclusively to defending religious freedom for all Americans.

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