

September 6, 2017

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
S-128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
S-146A, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen
Chairman
U.S. House Committee on Appropriations
H-305, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
U.S. House Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Cochran, Vice Chairman Leahy, Chairman Frelinghuysen, and Ranking Member Lowey:

As you finalize legislation to fund federal programs past the end of the fiscal year on September 30, we write to strongly oppose the inclusion of ideological policy riders that are harmful to women's health.

Opponents of women's health in the administration and in Congress have long used the budget and appropriations process to undermine access to comprehensive reproductive care, including access to safe and legal abortion. We continue to strongly oppose policy riders that deny insurance coverage of abortion for people enrolled in Medicaid, people who work for the federal government, people who live in the District of Columbia, and others as well as riders that embolden health care entities to refuse to comply with laws that ensure access to abortion services.

A number of new anti-women's health policy riders were included in individual FY 2018 appropriations bills as they moved through the House Appropriations Committee. We oppose the poison-pill riders we have seen in this year's House bills, described below, and any additional policy riders that would defund Planned Parenthood or harm women and LGBTQ people's health.

- **Sweeping new religious refusal language allowing employers, insurers, and health care providers to deny others access to abortion.** The House Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (LHHS) appropriations bill includes language, taken from the Conscience Protection Act (S.301/H.R.644), legislation that would threaten patient safety by allowing health care entities to refuse to "facilitate," "make arrangements for," or "otherwise participate in" abortions even where a patient's health is in danger. This provision would allow hospitals, doctors, nurses, and other health care providers to determine a patient's care based on the provider's religious beliefs, not based on what is best for the patient's health and circumstances. This could result in hospitals turning away people in serious emergency situations, and refusing to provide even information that would allow people to make an informed decision and seek treatment elsewhere. The provision would also allow bosses to interfere with women and LGBTQ people's health insurance coverage for abortion, depriving them of the comprehensive coverage that enables them to make personal medical decisions.
- **A rider blocking patients from accessing care at Planned Parenthood health centers.** The House LHHS bill includes a provision intended to block people from accessing care at Planned Parenthood health centers. This rider would prevent Planned Parenthood from participating in any government-funded health care programs, including Medicaid, the Title X Family Planning Program, HIV prevention grants, maternal and child health programs, and evidence-based sex education programs and would have a devastating impact on access to basic health care services for women, men, and young people, including LGBTQ people, around the country.

- **A provision to block ongoing and potentially life-saving research involving fetal tissue.** The House LHHS bill includes a new rider that would block federal funding for research using human fetal tissue if such tissue is obtained after an abortion. Given that every person in this country has benefited from research involving fetal tissue, this unnecessary restriction would undermine research that has led to a number of medical advancements and new preventive and therapeutic interventions for a wide range of diseases and conditions, including neurological disorders cancer, HIV/AIDS, and birth defects.
- **A provision that extends existing harmful restrictions on insurance coverage of abortion by banning all multi-state plans under the Affordable Care Act (ACA) from including such coverage.** The House Financial Services and General Government (FSGG) bill includes a provision that would take away existing health insurance coverage, thereby further restricting a person's access to safe and legal abortion.
- **Language that restricts access to abortion for women in U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention.** The House Homeland Security appropriations bill includes a ban on coverage and provision of abortion services for individuals in ICE custody except in cases of rape, incest, and a very narrow definition of life endangerment. Furthermore, the language includes a harmful refusal provision that would allow any ICE employee to refuse "to perform or facilitate in any way" any abortion.
- **Reinstatement of the global gag rule, also known as the Mexico City Policy, a provision that greatly undermines access to health care services around the world.** The House State and Foreign Operations (SFOPs) bill includes the expanded global gag rule, which denies foreign organizations U.S. global health assistance if they provide information, referrals, or services for legal abortion or advocate for the legalization of abortion in their country, even if these activities are supported solely with non-U.S. funds.
- **Prohibition on U.S. contributions to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).** The House SFOPs bill would cut off funding for UNFPA's life-saving maternal and reproductive health services to the poorest communities in more than 150 countries, including those facing humanitarian crises and conflict.

Additionally, we strongly oppose the draconian and ideologically driven funding cuts proposed in bills passed by the House Appropriations Committee. In particular, we urge you to reject cuts to the Title X Family Planning Program, the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program, and international family planning and reproductive health -- programs that are proven to improve health outcomes for women and LGBTQ people at home and abroad.

As you and your colleagues make critical decisions about FY 2018 funding bills, we urge you to protect women's health by ensuring that these and any other ideological policy riders are excluded and that funding is protected for programs that improve health outcomes for women, men, and young people, including LGBTQ people.

Sincerely,

Advocates for Youth
 AIDS Alabama
 AIDS Foundation of Chicago
 AIDS United
 American Association of University Women (AAUW)
 American Civil Liberties Union
 American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
 American Humanist Association
 American Society for Reproductive Medicine
 Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum
 ASID
 Association of Reproductive Health Professionals
 AVAC

Balanced Stewardship Development Association
Better World Campaign
Black Women's Health Imperative
Catholics for Choice
Center for American Progress
Center for Biological Diversity
Center for Health and Gender Equity (CHANGE)
Center for Reproductive Rights
COMMUNITY AND FAMILY AID FOUNDATION
Feminist Majority Foundation
Generation Initiative for Women and Youth Network (GIWYN)
Global Justice Institute
Hadassah, The Women's Zionist Organization of America, Inc.
Hispanic Health Network
HIV Prevention Justice Alliance
Human Rights Watch
In Our Own Voice: National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda
International Planned Parenthood Federation
International Women's Health Coalition
International Youth Alliance for Family Planning
Ipas
Latino Commission on AIDS
Marie Stopes International
Metropolitan Community Churches
NARAL Pro-Choice America
National Abortion Federation
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF)
National Center for Lesbian Rights
National Council of Jewish Women
National Family Planning & Reproductive Health Association
National Health Law Program
National Institute for Reproductive Health
National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund
National Network of Abortion Funds
National Organization for Women
National Partnership for Women & Families
National Women's Health Network
PAI
People For the American Way
Physicians for Reproductive Health
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
Population Connection Action Fund
Population Council
Population Institute
Positive Women's Network - USA
Positive Women's Network -USA Pennsylvania chapter
Pride Action Tank
Project Inform
Raising Women's Voices for the Health Care We Need
Religious Institute
Secular Coalition for America
Sierra Club
The Last Mile Consulting
The United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society
Treatment Action Group

Union for Reform Judaism
Uplift International
URGE: Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equity
Voices for Progress
Women's Refugee Commission