

January 16, 2018

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Democratic Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Ryan and Leader Pelosi:

As we celebrate the 45th anniversary of *Roe v. Wade* and begin the new year, the undersigned organizations write in strong opposition to the continued attacks on women's health care, which are merely wasteful and harmful attempts to push abortion care out of reach for women. The upcoming House vote on H.R.4712 is just the latest in a long line of actions seeking to curtail access to safe, legal abortion care and improperly insert politics into the relationship between patients and their health care providers. While some members of Congress are doggedly pursuing an anti-women's health agenda and seeking to force people back into the dark ages, the undersigned organizations reject their efforts and stand firmly in support of the constitutional right to access safe and legal abortion care. We urge all members of Congress to oppose any legislation that shames women and stigmatizes providers.

Abortion has been and will always be a part of women's lives. A woman's health, not politics, should inform important medical decisions. This deeply personal decision should always be made by a woman in consultation with her health care provider, family, and other individuals she trusts, not politicians. Politicians are not medical experts and have no place in the exam room interfering with the provision of compassionate, evidence-based care.

In recent years, we have witnessed an unprecedented onslaught of attacks on women's reproductive health. These attacks clearly demonstrate the way extremists have usurped the political system to advance views opposed by most Americans. Seven in 10 Americans consistently say they believe that abortion care should be legal.ⁱ They believe that individuals should make the decisions about how and when and with whom they become parents—not politicians. Bills that restrict access to comprehensive reproductive health care are part of an extreme agenda that is out of step with the priorities of America's women and families. This latest attempt with H.R.4712 threatens medical professionals with criminal penalties, disregarding providers' training and clinical judgment and undermining their ability to determine the best course of action with their patients. Medical organizations such as the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists oppose this legislation, recognizing that it is just another attempt to deny individuals access to abortion care.

Already in the 115th Congress, reproductive health and rights have been attacked time and time again. Congressional leadership has advanced a series of dangerous measures that would seriously harm access to comprehensive health care in both chambers. These attacks target the most vulnerable populations and have a disparately heavy impact on women, low-income populations, communities of color, immigrants, and LGBTQ individuals.

Whether it's restricting coverage of abortion care in public and private insurance, advancing refusals under the guise of religious freedom, targeting health care practitioners providing safe, evidence-based care, or criminalizing constitutionally protected care, we stand in strong opposition to these harmful and unprecedented Congressional attacks on reproductive health.

We are disappointed that members of Congress routinely choose to continue along this destructive path rather than focus on the many pressing issues facing the country. The U.S. Constitution guarantees the right to abortion—a right that one in four women will exercise in her lifetime. Access to safe, legal abortion is critical to ensuring that women are able to lead full, healthy lives.

We call on members to work towards advancing policies that actually help women and families rather than restricting women's access to the health care they need and deserve. Women—not politicians—are best qualified to make decisions about their own health.

Sincerely,

Advocates for Youth

American Civil Liberties Union

Black Women's Health Imperative

Catholics for Choice

Center for Reproductive Rights

In Our Own Voice: National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda

Jewish Women International

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 (NIRH)

National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health

National Network of Abortion Funds

National Organization for Women

National Partnership for Women & Families

NARAL Pro-Choice America

National Women's Health Network

National Women's Law Center

People for the American Way

Physicians for Reproductive Health

Planned Parenthood Federation of America

Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS)

URGE: Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equity

ⁱ NARAL Pro-Choice America. (2014). *NARAL Pro-Choice America: National Survey, Frequency Questionnaire*. Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research.