



January 23, 2017

Vote “NO” on H.R. 7, the “No Taxpayer Funding for Abortion and Abortion Insurance Full Disclosure Act of 2017”

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and our nearly two million members and supporters, we urge Members of the House of Representatives to vote no on H.R. 7, the so-called “No Taxpayer Funding for Abortion and Abortion Insurance Full Disclosure Act of 2017.” The ACLU opposes this legislation, which would make harmful, discriminatory abortion coverage restrictions permanent and interfere with private health insurance coverage for abortion.

H.R. 7 would make permanent the Hyde Amendment and its progeny, discriminatory abortion coverage restrictions that single out and exclude abortion from a host of programs that fulfill the government’s obligation to provide health care. These restrictions disproportionately impact those who already face significant barriers to care—low-income families, women of color, immigrants, young people, LGBTQ people, and those in rural areas. They discriminate against these women, who rely on the government for health care, by severely restricting their access to a health care service that is readily available to women of means and women with private insurance.

A woman in need of abortion care who does not have independent financial resources must scramble to raise the necessary funds, delay receiving care, and is often left with no choice but to carry to term in circumstances where she is physically, emotionally, or financially unprepared to care for a child. In fact, restricting Medicaid coverage of abortion forces one in four poor women seeking abortion to carry an unwanted pregnancy to term. When a woman seeking an abortion is denied one, she is three times more likely to fall into poverty than a woman who can obtain the care she needs. If a woman chooses to carry to term, Medicaid (and other federal insurance programs) offers her assistance for the necessary medical care. But if she needs to end her pregnancy, the same programs will deny her coverage for her abortion. The government should not interfere with a woman’s personal medical decisions by selectively withholding benefits in this way.

H.R. 7 also takes particular aim at low-income women in the District of Columbia. Although the use of federal funds is currently restricted from covering most abortions, states are free to use their own funds to include abortion coverage in their medical assistance programs. The only exception is the District of Columbia. H.R. 7 would make permanent a provision that forbids the District from using its own locally raised non-federal dollars to provide coverage for abortion for its low-income residents. The D.C. abortion ban disenfranchises the District’s residents,

AMERICAN CIVIL
LIBERTIES UNION
WASHINGTON
LEGISLATIVE OFFICE
915 15th STREET, NW, 6TH FL
WASHINGTON, DC 20005
T/202.544.1681
F/202.546.0738
WWW.ACLU.ORG

FAIZ SHAKIR
DIRECTOR

NATIONAL OFFICE
125 BROAD STREET, 18TH FL.
NEW YORK, NY 10004-2400
T/212.549.2500

OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS
SUSAN N. HERMAN
PRESIDENT

ANTHONY D. ROMERO
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

ROBERT REMAR
TREASURER

and allows non-resident Members of Congress who are not accountable to the people of the District to impose their own ideology upon the District's residents with impunity.

H.R. 7 would also impact women's ability to purchase private insurance that includes abortion coverage. It would revive the so-called Stupak Amendment, rejected by the 111th Congress, which would bar anyone receiving a federal premium assistance credit from buying a private insurance policy that includes abortion coverage on the Affordable Care Act's (ACA) insurance exchanges. This is not only an attempt to effectively ban abortion coverage in the exchanges by encouraging insurers to exclude it, but it would have a ripple effect on plans outside the exchanges that jeopardizes abortion coverage for millions of women. Further, the inaccurate disclosure requirements in H.R. 7 would push insurance companies to drop abortion coverage and deter women from purchasing plans that include such coverage by misleading them about the cost of purchasing these plans. These provisions are direct attacks on a woman's ability to make personal medical decisions with complete and accurate information.

Additionally, H.R. 7 rewrites tax law to penalize a single, legal, medical procedure: abortion. It would deny small businesses tax credits if the insurance they provide to their employees includes abortion coverage, effectively coercing employers to offer plans that exclude abortion. The bill would also deny millions of women and families premium tax credits if they purchase a health insurance plan that covers abortion, forcing them to forgo comprehensive health insurance plans in order to get the premium assistance they need. This manipulation of the tax code is simply government interference in taxpayers' private medical decisions and should be rejected.

Abortion is basic, constitutionally-protected health care for women. Yet H.R. 7 attacks women's fundamental right and access to abortion. It first targets women—particularly poor women and women of color who rely on the government for their health care—and seeks to permanently deny them coverage for a benefit to which they are entitled. Then, under the guise of "safeguarding" taxpayer dollars, H.R. 7 advances an aggressive campaign to destabilize the insurance market for abortion coverage. Congress should be eliminating barriers to women's ability to exercise their constitutionally protected right to safe, legal abortion. Instead, H.R. 7 would interfere with women's personal medical decisions by putting even more barriers in the way.

For these reasons, the ACLU opposes H.R. 7 and urges members of the House of Representatives to vote no. Should you have any questions, please contact Georgeanne Usova, Legislative Counsel, at (202) 675-2338 or gusova@aclu.org.

Sincerely,



Faiz Shakir
Director, Washington Legislative Office



Georgeanne M. Usova
Legislative Counsel