

March 15, 2016

Dear Chairman Grassley and Ranking Member Leahy:

We write to you as organizations strongly opposed to the continued attacks on women's health care. The Senate Judiciary Committee's hearing, "Late-Term Abortion: Protecting Babies Born Alive and Capable of Feeling Pain," represents yet another tired, wasteful, and harmful attempt to push abortion out of reach for women. Abortion has been and will always be a part of women's lives. While some members of this Committee are pursuing an anti-women's health agenda and seeking to force women back into the dark ages and alleys, the undersigned organizations reject their efforts and stand firmly in support of a woman's constitutional right to safe and legal abortion.

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 doctor, family, and other individuals she trusts, not politicians. When a woman needs to end her pregnancy, it is important that she have access to safe, legal medical care, not roadblocks to that care.

In recent years, we have witnessed an unprecedented onslaught of attacks on women's reproductive health. The attacks represent the way extremists have usurped the political system to advance views that most Americans disagree with and oppose. Seven in 10 Americans consistently say they believe that abortion access should be legal.<sup>i</sup> They believe that the decision of how and when and with whom we become parents is best made by women—not politicians. This latest committee hearing is yet another example of an extreme agenda that is out of step with the priorities of America's women and families.

In the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress, women's health and rights have been attacked time and time again. Congressional leadership has brought a series of dangerous bills that would seriously limit access to safe, legal abortion to the floor in both chambers—including the two that are the subject of this hearing (S. 1553/H.R. 36 and S. 2066). The harmful and unconstitutional nationwide ban on abortions twenty weeks after fertilization (S. 1553/H.R. 36) passed the House and received a failed floor vote in the Senate last fall. S. 2066, which would interfere with the provider-patient relationship with the intent of intimidating doctors who provide abortion care, passed the House (H.R. 3504) just days after introduction. We stand in strong opposition to both of these bills.

Congress has also taken nine votes on defunding Planned Parenthood—including one that took place just days after a devastating mass shooting at a Planned Parenthood health center in Colorado—and launched five separate investigations into Planned Parenthood and related issues. This harmful campaign is premised on nothing more than discredited videos released by extremists opposed to abortion. Planned Parenthood and other abortion providers<sup>ii</sup> have been cleared of wrongdoing in twelve states and another eight states have declined to investigate, including a grand jury that set out to investigate Planned Parenthood in Houston, Texas, but instead indicted the makers of these videos.<sup>iii</sup>

In addition, appropriators also attempted to attach a variety of extreme, poison-pill policy riders to must-pass funding bills intended to keep the government running, including one that would have undermined women's ability to access abortion care, even in life-threatening circumstances.

Both chambers introduced, and the House passed, a rarely-applied resolution of disapproval to block a D.C. non-discrimination law that protects employees from workplace discrimination based on their and their family members' reproductive health decisions. Even after this effort failed, some congressional members tried to attach a policy rider to appropriations to block enforcement of the D.C. law.

Finally, both chambers have attempted to broadly expand restrictions on abortion coverage. The Senate majority tried to attach an unprecedented abortion restriction on a bill intended to help survivors of child sex trafficking, while the House passed—just hours after the bill was introduced—a draconian ban on insurance coverage of abortion.

We are disappointed that with this hearing, the Committee has chosen to continue along this destructive path rather than focus on the many pressing issues facing the country. The U.S. Constitution guarantees a woman's right to abortion—a right that one in three 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 urge the Committee to recognize that women—not politicians—are best qualified to make decisions about their own health, and to stop attempting to restrict women's access to the care they need.

Sincerely,

Advocates for Youth  
American Association of University Women (AAUW)  
American Civil Liberties Union  
Association of Reproductive Health Professionals  
Black Women's Health Imperative  
Catholics for Choice  
Center for Reproductive Rights  
Feminist Majority Foundation  
Institute for Science and Human Values  
JWI  
NARAL Pro-Choice America  
National Abortion Federation  
National Center for Lesbian Rights  
National Council of Jewish Women  
National Family Planning & Reproductive Health Association  
National Health Law Program  
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health  
National Network of Abortion Funds  
National Partnership for Women & Families  
National Women's Health Network  
National Women's Law Center  
People For the American Way  
Physicians for Reproductive Health

Planned Parenthood Federation of America  
Population Connection Action Fund  
Population Institute  
Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice  
Reproductive Health Technologies Project  
Sexuality Information and Education Council of the U.S. (SIECUS)  
Union for Reform Judaism  
URGE: Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equity

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

<sup>ii</sup> After watching 504 hours of video, Judge Orrick of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California issued a preliminary injunction preventing the release of this footage wherein he wrote “I have reviewed the recordings relied on by defendants and find no evidence of criminal wrongdoing.” National Abortion Federation v. The Center for Medical Progress et al. Case No. 3:15-cv-03522-WHO Document 354.

<sup>iii</sup> Manny Fernandez, *2 Abortion Foes Behind Planned Parenthood Videos Are Indicted*, N.Y. TIMES, Jan. 25, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/26/us/2-abortion-foes-behind-planned-parenthood-videos-are-indicted.html>.