

September 21, 2016

The Honorable Trent Franks
Chairman
House Judiciary Committee
Subcommittee on the Constitution and Civil Justice

The Honorable Steve Cohen
Ranking Member
House Judiciary Committee
Subcommittee on the Constitution and Civil Justice

Dear Chairman Franks and Ranking Member Cohen:

The undersigned organizations are committed to advancing reproductive health, rights, and justice with a vision of accessible reproductive health care for all. We believe that the amount of money a woman has should not prevent her from being able to have an abortion. To this end, we strongly support lifting the Hyde Amendment and all other bans on insurance coverage of comprehensive reproductive health care, which includes abortion.

Safe, quality abortion services should be available and affordable to every person regardless of their ability to pay, source of insurance, or where they live. This helps to ensure that each of us can make personal health decisions based on what is best for ourselves and our families. However, since the passage of the Hyde Amendment in 1976, the appropriations process has been used as a vehicle to systematically deny access to comprehensive reproductive health care. Similar provisions have also been enacted, resulting in restrictions on insurance coverage of abortion for: (i) Medicaid, Medicare, and Children's Health Insurance Program beneficiaries; (ii) federal employees and their dependents; (iii) Peace Corps volunteers; (iv) Native American women; (v) women in federal prisons and detention centers, including those detained for immigration purposes; and (vi) low-income women in the District of Columbia through the use of local funds.

Withholding coverage for abortion care creates profound hardships for people across the country, particularly for those who already face significant barriers to receiving high-quality health care, such as low-income women, immigrant women, young women, women of color, and transgender and gender-nonconforming people. For many, coverage for abortion means the difference between getting the health care they need and being denied that care.

For 40 years, politicians have used the Hyde Amendment to interfere in women's health decisions and push abortion out of reach for those struggling to make ends meet. Studies show that when policymakers place restrictions on Medicaid coverage of abortion, it forces one in four poor women to carry an unintended pregnancy to term. Additionally, a woman who seeks an abortion, but is denied, is more likely to fall into poverty than one who is able to get an abortion.

We commend the members of Congress who have stood up against these attacks, including many members of the Judiciary Committee. Congresswoman Barbara Lee introduced the Equal Access to Abortion Coverage in Health Insurance (EACH) Woman Act (H.R. 2972) with more than 70 colleagues in July of 2015. The bill now has a total of 122 cosponsors, and polling shows that a majority of American voters would support a bill that would require Medicaid coverage of abortion.

These policies have harmed our families, our communities, and our health for far too long. However one feels about abortion, politicians should not be allowed to deny a woman's health coverage for it just because she's poor. We urge you to lift the Hyde Amendment and all policy riders that restrict funding for abortion coverage and invite you to work with us to build a future where reproductive health decisions are treated with dignity and compassion.

Sincerely,

A is For
Abortion Care Network
Allentown Women's Center
Alliance for Justice
American Civil Liberties Union
Backline
California Latinas for Reproductive Justice
California Women's Law Center
Catholics for Choice
Center for Reproductive Rights
Center on Reproductive Rights and Justice at UC Berkeley
Colorado Organization for Latina Opportunity and Reproductive Rights (COLOR)
Emergency Medical Assistance, Inc.
Equality for HER
Feminist Majority Foundation
Forward Together
Gender Justice
Healthy and Free Tennessee
Hmong National Development
Ibis Reproductive Health
In Our Own Voice: National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda
Ipas
Lady Parts Justice League
Mabel Wadsworth Women's Health Center
NARAL Pro-Choice America
NARAL Pro-Choice North Carolina
NARAL Pro-Choice Oregon
NARAL Pro-Choice Texas
NARAL Pro-Choice Virginia
National Abortion Federation
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum
National Center for Lesbian Rights
National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA)
National Council of Jewish Women
National Family Planning & Reproductive Health Association
National Health Law Program
National Institute for Reproductive Health
National Korean American Service and Education Consortium
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health
National Partnership for Women & Families
National Women's Health Network
National Women's Law Center
Nursing Students for Choice

Physicians for Reproductive Health
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
Pro-Choice Resources
Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice
Religious Institute
Reproductive Health Access Project
Sea Change Program
SisterSong: National Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective
Southwest Women's Law Center
SPARK Reproductive Justice Now!
The Reproductive Health Technologies Project
Union for Reform Judaism
Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equity (URGE)
Western States Center
Women Donors Network
Women of Reform Judaism
Women's Media Center
Women's Medical Fund (PA)
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