

March 4, 2015

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama,

We are 55 organizations dedicated to promoting reproductive health and rights around the world. We write to urge the Administration to correct the unduly restrictive implementation of the Helms Amendment by issuing guidance to USAID and the State Department to support safe abortion services in the cases of rape, incest, and life endangerment, and to do so without concessions.

We are concerned that proposals are being considered that would enshrine special exemptions for groups that object even to providing *referrals* for life-saving abortions, or abortions to women who have been raped. We strongly oppose such exemptions, which put the interests of grant recipients ahead of the critical needs of some of the world's most marginalized women—the very people whom our foreign assistance is intended to help. We also object to the establishment of a harmful policy under which an organization's refusal to provide safe abortion services to a woman who has been raped or who faces a life-endangering pregnancy may not be considered when evaluating grant proposals.

Extending special protections to opponents of women's health would represent a tremendous and unnecessary capitulation to groups that seek to eliminate safe access to abortion care altogether. Prioritizing their funding above women's lives distorts the goals of foreign assistance and sets a dangerous precedent.

We call upon you to correct the unduly restrictive implementation of the Helms Amendment as soon as possible, and to do so without making harmful and unnecessary concessions that undermine women's health and wellbeing.

Sincerely,

Advocates for Youth
American Association of University Women (AAUW)
American Civil Liberties Union
American Humanist Association
Amnesty International USA
Anti-Defamation League
California Women's Law Center
Catholics for Choice
Center for Health and Gender Equity (CHANGE)
Center for Inquiry
Center for Reproductive Rights
Center for Women Policy Studies
Center on Reproductive Rights and Justice at UC Berkeley School of Law

EngenderHealth
Family Care International
Feminist Majority Foundation
GetEQUAL
Global Doctors for Choice
Global Fund for Women
Hadassah, The Women's Zionist Organization of America, Inc.
Ibis Reproductive Health
Institute for Science and Human Values, Inc.
International Center for Research on Women
International Women's Health Coalition
Ipas
John Snow, Inc. (JSI)
Methodist Federation for Social Action
NARAL Pro-Choice America
National Abortion Federation
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum
National Center for Transgender Equality
National Council of Jewish Women
National Family Planning & Reproductive Health Association
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health
National LGBTQ Task Force
National Organization for Women
National Partnership for Women & Families
National Women's Law Center
PAI
Pathfinder International
Physicians for Reproductive Health
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
Population Connection Action Fund
Population Council
Population Institute
Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice
Religious Institute
Reproductive Health Technologies Project
Secular Coalition for America
Secular Policy Institute
Sexual Information and Education Council of the U.S. (SIECUS)
Sierra Club
Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
Women's Information Network

cc: Ms. Valerie Jarrett
Chair, White House Council on Women and Girls and Senior Adviser to the President

Ms. Tina Tchen
Assistant to the President and Chief of Staff to the First Lady
Executive Director, White House Council on Women and Girls

Ms. Gayle Smith
Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director, National Security Council