

January 23, 2012

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

Dear Mr. President:

As organizations committed to advancing women's reproductive health and rights, we appreciate the challenges your Administration has faced in protecting and expanding access to comprehensive reproductive health. We look forward to continuing to work with you to halt the ongoing, significant efforts to restrict women's comprehensive healthcare and to move instead to expanding access to healthcare that includes abortion.

Abortion is a vital part of women's reproductive health care. At least half of women will experience an unintended pregnancy by age 45, and about one-third will have had an abortion.ⁱ Unfortunately, Congressional bans on public funding for abortion services severely restrict access to abortion for women who depend on the government for their healthcare. These policies create unjust obstacles to healthcare for federal employees and those who already face significant barriers to receiving high-quality healthcare, such as poor women, women of color and some immigrant women. It is particularly unfair that women in the District of Columbia should be impacted by Congressional over-reach that restricts the use of D.C.'s own local dollars.

We urge you to strike from your FY 2013 budget language restricting funding for: (i) Medicaid-eligible women and Medicare beneficiaries; (ii) Federal employees and their dependents; (iii) Peace Corps volunteers; (iv) women receiving care through the Indian Health Service; (v) women in federal prisons; and (vi) use by the District of Columbia of its own funds for abortions for low-income women. It is crucial that the Administration's budget signal your commitment to work with Congress to repeal all of these harmful riders.

In addition, we ask that you support the vital healthcare needs of our servicewomen, military spouses and dependents and indicate your support for a repeal of the abortion ban at U.S. military facilities. This statutory ban bars almost all abortion services at military hospitals and other medical facilities with a narrow exception for "life, rape, or incest." Even a servicewoman whose health is jeopardized by her pregnancy may not obtain abortion care with her own money at a U.S. military medical facility. This ban is particularly devastating for those stationed overseas, especially in countries that ban abortion outright.

We are also grateful for your continuing support of efforts to repeal the ban against abortion coverage for women who become pregnant as a result of sexual assault. Our servicewomen and military wives deserve the same access to and coverage of care as other women who rely on the federal government for their health care. Both of these current bans – impacting over 100,000 U.S. servicewomen and military dependents – are simply unjust and unconscionable. We were very pleased to see that the Department of Defense recently indicated its support for the

MARCH for Military Women Act (S.1214/H.R. 2085), a bill to lift the military abortion bans.
Thank you for your support of this legislation.

We look forward to working with you on these and other issues related to women's reproductive health care and rights over the coming year.

Sincerely,

Advocates for Youth
American Association of University Women (AAUW)
American Civil Liberties Union
American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
Black Women's Health Imperative
Center for American Progress Action Fund
Center for Reproductive Rights
Disciples for Choice and Disciples Justice Action Network
Hadassah, The Women's Zionist Organization of America, Inc.
Ipas
Methodist Federation for Social Action
NARAL Pro-Choice America
National Abortion Federation
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum
National Council of Jewish Women
National Health Law Program
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health and Rights
National Family Planning & Reproductive Health Association
National Network of Abortion Funds
National Organization for Women
National Women's Health Network
National Women's Law Center
Physicians for Reproductive Choice and Health
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice
Religious Institute
Reproductive Health Technologies Project
Sexuality Information and Education Council of the U.S. (SIECUS)

ⁱ Guttmacher Institute, "In Brief: Facts on Induced Abortion in the United States," (August 2011), http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/fb_induced_abortion.pdf (accessed January 12, 2012).