

October 21, 2015

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
S-128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Vice Chairwoman
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
S-146A, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Harold Rogers
Chairman
U.S. House Committee on Appropriations
H-305, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
U.S. House Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Cochran, Vice Chairwoman Mikulski, Chairman Rogers, and Ranking Member Lowey:

As Congress continues its attacks on Planned Parenthood, which provides critical, high-quality health care services to millions of women, men, and young people, the undersigned organizations write to strongly oppose any consideration in year-end funding legislation of ideological policy riders that are harmful to women's health and to support efforts towards a budget deal that stops sequestration and raises the spending caps that continue to harm women's health.

Opponents of women's health have used the appropriations process to undermine women's access to comprehensive reproductive care, including access to safe and legal abortion. We continue to strongly oppose policy riders that deny insurance coverage of abortion for women enrolled in Medicaid, women who work for the federal government, women who live in the District of Columbia, and others.

Earlier this year, a number of new anti-women's health policy riders were included in individual FY 2016 appropriations bills as they moved through the House Appropriations Committee—long before the most recent discredited smear campaign against Planned Parenthood began. We oppose these riders, listed below, and any additional policy riders that would prohibit funding for Planned Parenthood health centers or harm women's health.

- **Sweeping new religious refusal language that would allow employers, insurers, and health care providers to deny others access to critical health care services.** This year's House Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (LHHS) appropriations bill includes language, taken from H.R. 940, the Health Care Conscience Rights Act (HCCRA), that would allow an employer or insurance company to refuse coverage of *any* health care service to which they have a religious or moral objection and would also limit access to abortion by permitting a broad range of health professionals to refuse care and coverage of abortion – even in life-endangering and emergency situations.
- **Language blocking the Reproductive Health Non-Discrimination Amendment Act (RHNDAA), a law passed unanimously by the Council of the District of Columbia.** The House Financial Services and General Government (FSGG) appropriations bill includes a provision that would stop implementation of RHNDAA, a local law that protects employees who work in DC from workplace discrimination based on the employees' personal reproductive health care decisions, like using in-vitro fertilization or birth control.
- **A provision that extends existing harmful restrictions on insurance coverage of abortion by banning all multi-state plans under the Affordable Care Act (ACA) from including such coverage (except in cases of rape, incest, or life endangerment).** The House FSGG bill includes a provision that would take away existing health insurance coverage, thereby further restricting a woman's access to safe and legal abortion.
- **Language that restricts access to abortion for women in U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention.** This year's Homeland Security appropriations bill includes a

ban on coverage and provision of abortion services for individuals in ICE custody except in cases of rape, incest, and a very narrow definition of life endangerment. This language further chips away at access to abortion by allowing any ICE employee to refuse “to perform or facilitate in any way” any abortion.

- **Reinstatement of the global gag rule, also known as the Mexico City Policy, a provision that greatly undermines access to family planning services at the global level.** The House State and Foreign Operations (SFOPs) bill includes the global gag rule, which denies foreign organizations U.S. international family planning assistance if they provide information, referrals, or services for legal abortion or advocate for the legalization of abortion in their country, even if these activities are supported solely with non-U.S. funds.
- **A provision that prohibits U.S. contributions to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in the House SFOPs bill.** UNFPA provides life-saving maternal and reproductive health services to the poorest communities in more than 150 countries and promotes human rights-based practices, extending the impact and reach of U.S. bilateral funding. A prohibition on U.S. funding would have a detrimental impact on UNFPA’s efforts to provide vulnerable women and their families, including those humanitarian crises and conflict areas, with the health services they need.

As you and your colleagues make critical decisions about how to proceed with FY 2016 funding bills, we urge you to protect women’s health by ensuring that these and any other ideological policy riders are excluded from the final package. Additionally, the pending appropriations bills include devastating funding cuts to several critical women’s health programs. Ensuring adequate funding for health-care programs and blocking damaging riders will protect women’s access to vital health care services at home and around the world.

Sincerely,

Advocates for Youth

American Association of University Women (AAUW)

American Civil Liberties Union

Catholics for Choice

Center for Reproductive Rights

Institute for Science and Human Values, Inc

International Women's Health Coalition

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 LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund

National Network of Abortion Funds

National Organization for Women
National Partnership for Women & Families
National Women's Health Network
National Women's Law Center
PAI
People For the American Way
Physicians for Reproductive Health
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
Population Connection Action Fund
Population Institute
Positive Women's Network - USA
Public Health Students for Choice
Reproductive Health Technologies Project
Secular Coalition for America
Sexuality Information and Education Council of the U.S. (SIECUS)
The Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice
Union for Reform Judaism
Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation
United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society
URGE: Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equity
Women of Reform Judaism
Woodhull Freedom Foundation