

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)
WV FREE