

Coalition Statement Opposing the Global Gag Rule 2017

We join together as diverse voices from a variety of sectors to oppose the harmful global gag rule, also known as the Mexico City Policy. While the Helms Amendment restricts U.S. foreign assistance funding for abortions “as a method of family planning,” the global gag rule goes a step further by blocking aid to foreign organizations who use their own non-U.S. funds to provide information, referrals, or services for legal abortion or to advocate for access to abortion services in their own country.

The global gag rule causes serious harm in countries around the world. The policy interferes with the doctor-patient relationship by restricting medical information healthcare providers may offer, limits free speech by prohibiting local citizens from participating in public policy debates, and impedes women’s access to family planning by cutting off funding for many of the most experienced health care providers who chose to prioritize quality reproductive-health services and counseling over funding that restricts care and censors information.

When in place, the negative impacts of the global gag rule have been broad and severe: health services have been dismantled in a number of communities; clinics that provided a range of reproductive, maternal, and child health care, including HIV testing and counseling, were forced to close; outreach efforts to hard to reach populations were eliminated; and access to contraceptives was severely limited, resulting in more unintended pregnancies and more unsafe abortions. Here is the testimony of one organization that experienced the impact of the global gag rule:

“After refusing the terms of the gag rule in 2001, at Family Health Options Kenya we lost a significant amount of funding from USAID with serious and damaging effects on our ability to provide crucial reproductive health and family planning services. We were forced to close six clinics, all of which provided critical services to poor and underserved populations in urban, peri-urban and rural areas including family planning, voluntary counseling and testing for HIV, management of sexually transmitted infections, post-abortion care and maternal and child health services. Following the closure of these clinics in 2005, at least 9,000 people – primarily women and children – were left with little or no access to health care.” - FHOK, 2013

Countries around the world are making significant progress in improving women’s health and the global gag rule undermines that momentum. Developing and donor countries alike are stepping up to prioritize and make tangible headway in closing the gap on access to modern family planning through increased funding and better policies. This momentum, which includes global partnerships like Family Planning 2020, builds on the essential foundation of U.S. investments in this sector. The global gag rule seriously hinders the effectiveness of U.S. global health investments and the growing global progress that we, as a global community, have made in expanding access to family planning for couples worldwide and in reducing maternal mortality.

The U.S. has been a leader when it comes to promoting democracy, women’s health, and human rights around the world. U.S. foreign aid should never be used as a tool to limit women’s access to health care or to censor free speech. Organizations should not be disqualified from receiving U.S. assistance because they use their own funds to provide health services and information that are legal in their home country and legal in the U.S. **Supporters of global health and development, women’s rights, gender equality, and free speech oppose the harmful global gag rule and reject efforts to undermine the health and rights of women around the world.**

Endorsing Organizations:

1. 30 for 30 Campaign
2. Advocates for Youth
3. AFL-CIO
4. AIDS Foundation of Chicago
5. AIDS United
6. Alliance to End Slavery & Trafficking
7. American Academy of Pediatrics
8. American Association of University Women (AAUW)
9. American Civil Liberties Union
10. American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
11. American Humanist Association
12. American Jewish World Service
13. American Medical Student Association
14. Americans United for Separation of Church and State
15. amfAR (The Foundation for AIDS Research)
16. Amnesty International USA
17. Anti-Defamation League
18. Association of Reproductive Health Professionals
19. AVAC
20. Black Women's Health Imperative
21. Breakthrough
22. carafem
23. CARE USA
24. Catholics for Choice
25. Center for Biological Diversity
26. Center for Health and Gender Equity (CHANGE)
27. Center for Inquiry
28. Center for Reproductive Rights
29. Center for Women Policy Studies
30. Colorado Organization for Latina Opportunity and Reproductive Rights (COLOR)
31. Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health
32. Consortium of Universities for Global Health
33. Council for Global Equality
34. CREDO
35. Disciple Public Witness; Disciples of Christ
36. Disciples for Choice
37. Disciples Justice Action Network
38. DKT International
39. Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation
40. EngenderHealth
41. Everywoman Everywhere
42. Feminist Majority
43. FP2020
44. Freedom From Religion Foundation
45. Global Doctors for Choice
46. Global Health Council
47. Global Initiatives for Human Rights (GIHR)

48. Global Justice Clinic, NYU School of Law
49. Global Justice Institute, Metropolitan Community Churches
50. Global Progressive Hub
51. Gynuity Health Projects
52. Hadassah, The Women's Zionist Organization of America, Inc.
53. Health GAP
54. Healthy Teen Network
55. HIV Medicine Association
56. Human Rights Campaign
57. Human Rights Watch
58. Ibis Reproductive Health
59. If/When/How: Lawyering for Reproductive Justice
60. In Our Own Voice: National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda
61. Ipas
62. Institute for Science and Human Values
63. International Center for Research on Women
64. International Medical Corps
65. International Planned Parenthood Federation
66. International Planned Parenthood Federation/Western Hemisphere Region
67. International Women's Health Coalition
68. IntraHealth International
69. John Snow, Inc.
70. JWI
71. Lutheran Women's Caucus
72. Management Sciences for Health
73. Marie Stopes International-US
74. Medical Students for Choice
75. Methodist Federation for Social Action
76. NARAL Pro-Choice America
77. National Abortion Federation
78. National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF)
79. National Center for Lesbian Rights
80. National Center for Transgender Equality
81. National Council of Jewish Women
82. National Family Planning & Reproductive Health Association
83. National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health
84. National LGBTQ Task Force
85. National Network of Abortion Funds
86. National Organization for Women
87. National Partnership for Women & Families
88. National Women's Health Network
89. National Women's Law Center
90. Norwegian Refugee Council USA
91. Outright Action International
92. PAI
93. Partners for Development
94. PATH
95. Pathfinder International

96. People For The American Way
97. Physicians for Reproductive Health
98. Planned Parenthood Federation of America
99. Population Connection Action Fund
100. Population Council
101. Population Institute
102. Population Media Center
103. Population Reference Bureau
104. Positive Women's Network - USA
105. PSI
106. Public Health Institute
107. Religious Institute
108. Reproaction
109. Reproductive Health Technologies Project
110. Republican Majority for Choice
111. Save the Children
112. Secular Coalition for America
113. Secular Student Alliance
114. Sexuality Information and Education Council of the U.S. (SIECUS)
115. Sierra Club
116. SisterLove, Inc.
117. Society for Humanistic Judaism
118. Student Global AIDS Campaign
119. The Global Forum on MSM & HIV (MSMGF)
120. The Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice
121. Treatment Action Group
122. UltraViolet
123. Union for Reform Judaism
124. Unitarian Universalist Association
125. Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation
126. United Methodist General Board of Church & Society
127. URGE: Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equity
128. UU Humanist Association
129. Voices for Progress
130. WaterAid
131. White Ribbon Alliance
132. WIN (Women's Information Network)
133. Women at the Center
134. Women Deliver
135. Women of Reform Judaism
136. Women's Refugee Commission
137. Women's Research & Education Institute
138. Women Thrive Alliance