

May 10, 2016

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 you continue consideration of individual appropriations bills for FY 2017, we write to strongly oppose the inclusion of ideological policy riders that are harmful to women's health.

Opponents of women's health have long 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.

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. Additionally, a debate around funding for Planned Parenthood health centers threatened to shut down the entire federal government. This year we have already seen renewed interest by anti-women's health organizations and Members of Congress to attach--or further expand-- harmful riders to FY 2017 appropriations bills. We oppose the poison-pill riders we have seen in past years, listed below, and any additional policy riders that would defund Planned Parenthood 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.** Last year's House Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (LHHS) appropriations bill included 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 – including 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 included 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 extended existing harmful restrictions on insurance coverage of abortion by banning all multi-state plans under the Affordable Care Act (ACA) from including such coverage.** The House FSGG bill included 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.** Last year's Homeland Security appropriations bill included 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. Furthermore, the language included a harmful refusal provision, 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 around the world.** The FY16 House and Senate State and Foreign Operations (SFOPs) base bills included 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.
- **Prohibition on U.S. contributions to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).** The FY16 House and Senate State and Foreign Operations (SFOPs) base bills cut off funding for UNFPA’s life-saving maternal and reproductive health services to the poorest communities in more than 150 countries, including those facing humanitarian crises and conflict.

As you and your colleagues make critical decisions about FY 2017 funding bills, we urge you to protect women’s health by ensuring that these and any other ideological policy riders are excluded.

Sincerely,

Advocates for Youth

American Association of University Women (AAUW)

American Civil Liberties Union

American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

Association of Reproductive Health Professionals

Better World Campaign

Catholics for Choice

Center for Health and Gender Equity (CHANGE)

Center for Reproductive Rights

Feminist Majority Foundation

Hadassah, The Women's Zionist Organization of America, Inc.

Institute for Science and Human Values

Jewish Women International

NARAL Pro-Choice America

National Abortion Federation

National Center for Lesbian Rights

National Council of Jewish Women

National Family Planning and Reproductive Health Association

National Health Law Program

National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health

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 Institute

Positive Women's Network - USA

Reproductive Health Technologies Project

Secular Coalition for America

Sexuality Information and Education Council of the  
U.S. (SIECUS)

UltraViolet

Union for Reform Judaism

URGE: Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equity

Women of Reform Judaism