

October 27, 2015

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

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Appropriations
The Capitol S-146A
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Hal Rogers
Chairman
House Committee on Appropriations
The Capitol H-305
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

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

As you head into the final negotiations on FY 2016 appropriations, we encourage you to fund international family planning and reproductive health at no less than \$612.6 million, including \$35 million for the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the amounts requested by President Obama and approved by the Senate Appropriations Committee. We believe this is an important step toward meeting the United States' fair share of global need—calculated at just over \$1 billion—for these critical programs which are cost-effective, save lives, and support our broader global health, development, and foreign policy priorities.

Additionally, we respectfully ask that you exclude harmful policy riders, including the reimposition of the Global Gag Rule, also known as the Mexico City Policy, and any prohibition on funding to UNFPA. These policies undermine U.S. efforts to address the unmet need for contraception—a critical intervention in meeting other U.S. global health priorities such as ending preventable maternal and child deaths.

Our country's investment in international family planning and reproductive health programs continues to have a significant impact on the lives of women and adolescents around the world. In FY 2015, funding of \$610 million for international family planning and reproductive health programs (of which \$35 million is a contribution to UNFPA) made it possible to achieve the following:

- 28 million women and couples receive contraceptive services and supplies;
- 6 million unintended pregnancies, including 3 million unplanned births, are averted;
- 2.4 million induced abortions are averted (1.9 million of them unsafe); and
- 12,000 maternal deaths are averted.¹

Despite the progress that has been made, an estimated 225 million women in developing countries want to prevent or delay pregnancy but face significant barriers to using modern contraceptive methods. Additionally, 290,000 women die every year from largely preventable complications related to pregnancy and childbirth, while many others suffer from pregnancy-related injuries, infections, and illnesses.

¹ *Just the Numbers: The Impact of U.S. International Family Planning Assistance*, Guttmacher Institute, April 2015. <http://www.guttmacher.org/media/resources/just-the-numbers-2015.pdf>

The Global Gag Rule, when in effect, is counterproductive to preventing unintended pregnancies and abortions. It does, however, impede women's access to family planning by cutting off funding for many of the most experienced health care providers in local communities, interfering with the doctor-patient relationship by restricting medical information health care providers may offer, and limiting free speech by prohibiting local citizens from participating in public policy debates.

The United States' critical contribution to UNFPA, the largest multilateral provider of family planning and reproductive health services, helps to expand the impact of U.S. foreign assistance dollars. UNFPA works in more than 150 countries, including those affected by conflict and humanitarian crises and those in which the United States does not have bilateral family planning and reproductive health programs. UNFPA's vital programs work to prevent maternal mortality, deliver services in resource-poor areas, expand access to contraceptives, and improve the overall status of women.

It is critical that the United States continues to make a strong investment in family planning and reproductive health, alongside other important global health, humanitarian, and development assistance accounts. Doing so, along with integrating these programs with other health services, will improve maternal and child health, reduce unintended pregnancies, lower HIV infection rates, promote women's rights and empowerment, enhance women's and girl's education, combat gender-based violence, raise standards of living, and support more sustainable development.

We appreciate your consideration of this request and thank you for your leadership.

Sincerely,

Advocates for youth
AIDS Alabama
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American Humanist Association
American Society for Reproductive Medicine
Association of Reproductive Health Professionals (ARHP)
AVAC
Better World Campaign
CARE USA
Catholics for Choice
Center for Biological Diversity
Center for Environment and Population (CEP)
Center for Health and Gender Equity (CHANGE)
Center for Reproductive Rights
Center for Women Policy Studies
EngenderHealth
Family Care International
Global Health Council
Global Youth Coalition on HIV/AIDS

Institute for Science and Human Values, Inc.
International Center for Research on Women (ICRW)
International Medical Corps
International Women's Health Coalition
International Youth Alliance for Family Planning
Ipas
IPPF WHR
John Snow, Inc. (JSI)
Management Sciences for Health
Marie Stopes International-US
Methodist Federation for Social Action
NARAL Pro-Choice America
National Center for Lesbian Rights
National Center for Transgender Equality
PAI
Partners for Development
Pathfinder International
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
Population Connection Action Fund
Population Council
Population Institute
Promundo-US
PSI
Public Health Institute
Reproductive Health Technologies Project
Sierra Club
Unitarian Universalist Association
United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society
Women's Refugee Commission

CC:

The Honorable Lindsey Graham
The Honorable Patrick Leahy
The Honorable Kay Granger