

December 5, 2014

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As organizations committed to advancing reproductive health, rights, and justice, and related social justice causes, we appreciate the important steps your Administration has taken to improve the wellbeing of women and their families, including the expansion of reproductive health care services. Moreover, the actions you have taken in prior budget proposals to eliminate certain abortion restrictions have made a real impact in driving momentum in Congress to modify such policies. Building on this tradition of executive leadership is critically important to our work.

There is no doubt of the challenges we face going forward. Now, more than ever, your support protecting and improving access to the full range of reproductive health care will be critical. That is why we residents of the District of Columbia.

Withholding coverage for abortion care creates profound hardships for millions of women and families, particularly for those who already face significant barriers to receiving quality health care, such as low-income women, immigrant women, young women, and women of color. And while nearly one third of states provide some abortion coverage with state Medicaid dollars, data from the U.S. Census indicate that today, nearly half of Latinas and approximately 70 percent of Black women—and a majority of all women of color—live in states where Medicaid coverage of abortion care is denied in cases beyond those of life endangerment, rape, and incest.

For many women, coverage for abortion care means the difference between getting the health care they need and being denied that care. For example, approximately one in four Medicaid-eligible women who would have had an abortion if funds were available must carry the pregnancy to term because she is unable to afford the cost of that care. The impact of such a denial can have long-term, devastating effects on a woman and her family's economic future. A

¹ National Latina Institute calculations from US Census Bureau "SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF THE UNINSURED IN THE UNITED STATES," 2013 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, <http://factfinder2.census.gov/>

recent study found that a woman who seeks but is denied abortion care is three times more likely to fall into poverty than a woman who is able to get the care she needs.³

Building on the efforts of dedicated advocates from across the country, a national movement led by Millennials, communities of color, and reproductive and economic justice advocates has risen up to call for an end to harmful bans on abortion coverage. We ask you, Mr. President, join us in standing up for the ability of women to make personal health decisions without interference.

The time is now. These policies have harmed our families, our communities, and our health for far too long. We urge you to eliminate all abortion coverage restrictions in your FY 2016 budget.

We look forward to working with your Administration so together we can defend access to reproductive health care, improve health equity and promote strong, healthy opportunities nationwide.

Signed,

Abortion Care Network

ACCESS Women's Health Justice

Advocates for Youth

American Civil Liberties Union

American Sexual Health Association

Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum

Baltimore Abortion Fund, Inc.

Black Women's Health Imperative

Blue Ridge AAF, Inc.

California Women's Law Center

Carolina Abortion Fund

Catholics for Choice

Center for Health and Gender Equity (CHANGE)

³ Foster DG, Dobkin LM, Upadhyay UD. Denial of abortion care due to gestational age limits.

Center for Reproductive Rights

Center for Reproductive Rights and Justice at UC Berkeley School of Law

Charlottesville NOW

Chicago Abortion Fund

CHOICES Memphis Center for Reproductive Health

Civil Liberties and Public Policy Program at Hampshire College

COLOR (Colorado Organization for Latina Opportunity and Reproductive Rights)

DC Abortion Fund

Emergency Medical Assistance, Inc.

Forward Together

Fund Texas Choice

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

Hispanic Federation

Ibis Reproductive Health

Ipas

KentuckyHealth Justice Network

Law Students for Reproductive Justice

Legal Voice

Lilith Fund for Reproductive Equity

Maternal and Child Health Access

Medical Students for Choice

Montana Women Vote

NARAL Pro-Choice America

National Abortion Federation

National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum

National Center for Lesbian Rights

National Council of Jewish Women

National Family Planning and Reproductive Health Association

National Health Law Program

Reproductive Health Access Project

Reproductive Health Technologies Project

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

Southwest Women's Law Center

SPARK Reproductive Justice NOW!

Texas Equal Access Fund

The Freedom Fund

UltraViolet

Unitarian Universalist Association

Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation

United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries

URGE: Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equity

Virginia National Organization for Women

West Virginia Focus: Reproductive Education & Equality (WV FREE)

Western States Center

Women Donors Network

Women Have Options Ohio

Women's Health Specialists, Feminist Women's Health Centers of California

Women's Medical Fund, Philadelphia

Women's Reproductive Rights Assistance Project

cc: Valerie Jarrett, Tina Tchen, Hallie Schneir, Cecilia Munoz, Jeffrey Zients, Kiran Ahuja, J. Nadine Gracia, Shaun Donovan, Brian Deese, Dr. Julian Harris, Martha Coven