

May XX, 2020

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Senate Committee on Appropriations
S-128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Senate Committee on Appropriations
S-146A, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nita Lowey
House Committee on Appropriations
H-307, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kay Granger
House Committee on Appropriations
1036 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Shelby, Vice Chairman Leahy, Chairwoman Lowey, and Ranking Member Granger:

As you debate and consider fiscal year 2021 (FY 2021) funding bills, the undersigned organizations committed to advancing reproductive health, rights, and justice urge you to introduce and pass bills that promote access to reproductive health care, including abortion, and protect reproductive freedom.

As we work together to face an unprecedented national crisis and global pandemic, our country is at a juncture. Policymakers opposed to reproductive health care are exploiting this crisis to eliminate abortion access. They are building off decades of attacks, including existing restrictions in appropriations bills that have for too long denied individuals access to affordable, comprehensive health care. Now is the time to put an end to these policies. The appropriations bills for FY 2021 must instead build to the future we want where access to comprehensive health care, including abortion and birth control, is provided precisely because it is essential for people's dignity and economic security.

To do so, FY 2021 appropriations bills must:

- **Not include abortion bans or restrictions on insurance coverage for abortion.** FY 2021 appropriations legislation must end the shameful legacy of the Hyde Amendment and be free of abortion coverage restrictions, including those that impact the following populations: (i) Medicaid, Medicare, and Children's Health Insurance Program beneficiaries; (ii) federal employees and their dependents; (iii) Peace Corps Volunteers; (iv) Native American communities; (v) people in federal prisons and detention centers, including those detained for immigration purposes; and (vi) people with low-incomes in the District of Columbia, who are further denied access via federal restrictions on the use of local funds.. Similarly, the FY 2021 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs bill should remove reiteration of the Helms amendment, which restricts abortion access through foreign assistance.
- **Eliminate the Weldon Amendment.** Attached to the Hyde Amendment in the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education (LHHS) bill since FY 2005, the Weldon Amendment allows providers, hospitals, and insurance companies, to use beliefs rather than evidence-based medical protocol, to determine patients' health care. The Trump Administration has attempted to

dramatically expand the reach of the amendment to threaten states that seek to protect abortion access while they continue to use this and other policies to deny patients access to critical care. This language must be removed from this year's appropriations bill.

- **Support high-quality, evidence-based, and patient-centered family planning care by protecting the integrity of the Title X program.** The LHHS bill should block the Trump Administration's Title X program rule and include language to allow existing and former networks to rebuild and begin to reverse the damage caused by the rule. With that language in place, we recommend appropriating \$400 million for the program.

- **Put patients first and end policies that protect those that seek to discriminate in health care.** This includes eliminating funding for the Office for Civil Rights so-called Conscience and Religious Freedom Division. This Division is focused solely on emboldening health care providers and institutions to use personal beliefs to discriminate against patients, including by advancing rules that undermine patient access to care. We urge you to ensure there is no federal funding for this Division's unlawful actions.

- **Support young people's access to the full range of sex education programs.** This includes providing the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program (TPPP) with \$101 million to support a wide range of evidence-based and informed community approaches to healthy youth development. The LHHS bill should provide this funding in a manner that protects the integrity of the program. In addition, provide \$6.8 million in evaluation for Teen Pregnancy Prevention approaches. In addition, provide \$100 million for CDC's Division of Adolescent and School Health to enable robust assistance to states, districts, and schools in their efforts to support student health and to lead research on a range of adolescent health behaviors.

- **End abstinence-only funding.** The LHHS bill should eliminate funding for the abstinence-only-until-marriage (also referred to as "sexual risk avoidance") competitive grant program, the latest attempt to repackage harmful programs that have been proven ineffective at their primary goal of young people delaying sex until marriage.

- **Increase funding for international family planning and reproductive health programs, including support for UNFPA.** International family planning and reproductive health programs are essential to empowering women and improving the health and lives of millions of people. We ask that you provide a minimum of \$1.030 billion for international family planning and reproductive health programs, including \$69 million for the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), without onerous and unnecessary restrictions. The administration's ban on funding to UNFPA, including in humanitarian settings, unnecessarily endangers health care workers and their patients. The requested funding level would continue the incremental funding increases begun by the House in FY 2020 to put the U.S. government on a funding trajectory to reach \$1.66 billion—its fair share of the global financial commitment necessary to address the unmet need for modern contraception.

- **Remove barriers that undermine global health programs, and include language to repeal the global gag rule.** The global gag rule is a harmful policy that undermines access to contraception, HIV/AIDS services, and maternal health care, contributing to more unintended pregnancies and more unsafe abortions. We call on Congress to include language to repeal the

global gag rule in the FY 2021 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs appropriations bill.

- **Block funding for regulations issued by the Trump Administration that undermine public health and safety and reduce access to affordable health care, including reproductive care.** The Trump Administration has spent the last three years issuing regulations that undermine public health and safety and target the health and well-being of those already facing barriers to care: LGBTQI+ people, people seeking reproductive health care, young people, people of color, and immigrants. Among others, these regulations include the public charge rule, the refusal of care rule, and the rule imposing new burdensome restrictions on plans that include abortion coverage. Appropriators must block funding for these harmful regulations.

These are among the many priorities FY 2021 appropriations bill must include in order to protect reproductive freedom. In addition, we urge you to strongly oppose the inclusion of any ideological policy riders that threaten reproductive health care access.

...

As you and your colleagues make critical decisions about FY 2021 funding bills, we urge you to protect access to reproductive health care and ensure that appropriations bills promote reproductive freedom for everyone.

Sincerely,