

Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

December 8, 2020

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Chairwoman  
House Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Labor Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies

The Honorable Tom Cole  
Ranking Member  
House Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Labor Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies

Dear Chairwoman DeLauro and Ranking Member Cole,

As our nation continues to face a moment of reckoning and transformation, it is absolutely critical that we remain unapologetic in our efforts to dismantle systems of oppression and stand against racist and discriminatory policies that push comprehensive health care—including abortion care—out of reach for our nation’s most vulnerable. As Chair of the Abortion Rights and Access Task Force of the Pro-Choice Caucus, I unequivocally support eliminating the Hyde Amendment and all other harmful abortion coverage bans, so that every person can benefit from the full spectrum of reproductive health care and the right to make decisions over their own bodies.

For more than four decades now, the Hyde Amendment has banned access to abortion care for low-income people who receive health insurance coverage through Medicaid. These abortion coverage bans have disproportionately impacted low-income people, immigrants, Black, Latinx, Indigenous communities, and transgender and gender-nonconforming people, perpetuating cycles of poverty and economic inequality. It is clear that the legal right to an abortion has never been enough and it is incumbent upon us to ensure that our policies and our budgets affirm the dignity and worth of all people, no exceptions.

Access to comprehensive health care and specifically abortion care is both an economic and racial justice issue. Through its policies and institutions, our nation has exacted precise hurt and harm on people of color and other historically marginalized communities since its inception. These structures have dictated who has access to critical healthcare, economic opportunity and the ability to exercise one’s bodily autonomy. Since the passage of the Hyde Amendment in 1976, the annual appropriations process has served as a vehicle to systematically deny access to the full spectrum of reproductive health care. Withholding coverage for abortion services creates profound hardships for people across the country and throughout the globe, particularly for those who already face significant barriers to high-quality health care. Currently, an estimated 30 percent of Black women and 24 percent of Latina women of reproductive age (15-44 years old) are covered by Medicaid — in comparison to just 14 percent of white women.

As our Black and brown communities continue to bare the disproportionate brunt of connected crises—an unprecedented public health crisis exacerbated by systemic racism, an economic crisis that has pushed workers and families further towards the brink of economic despair, and the plague of police brutality disproportionately robbing us of Black and brown lives—the Trump Administration and anti-choice politicians across the country have enacted an all out assault on reproductive health care. Furthermore, the rushed and unjust confirmation of Justice Amy Coney Barrett to the Supreme Court demonstrates that reproductive rights and justice have never been more at risk. Congress has a responsibility to proactively legislate racial and reproductive justice and meaningfully advance policies that affirm that abortion care is health care and that health care is a fundamental human right.

Over the course of my first term serving in the House of Representatives, I have twice filed amendments that would strike the Hyde Amendment from the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies funding bills. I commend Chairwoman Rosa DeLauro and Congresswoman Barbara Lee for their leadership on these issues and for holding today’s important hearing on the impact of these coverage bans and the critical need to pass clean appropriation bills to ensure that comprehensive reproductive health care is available to all. I stand ready to work alongside you to ensure that Congress right the wrongs of the past and makes reproductive autonomy a guaranteed right for everyone.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ayanna Pressley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ayanna Pressley  
Member of Congress