

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 1, 2021

The Honorable Joe Biden
President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As leaders of the Pro-Choice Caucus and Democratic Women’s Caucus on behalf of the pro-choice majority in the House of Representatives, and Senators committed to reproductive health access, we request that you eliminate abortion coverage restrictions from your Fiscal Year 2022 budget. We are committed to ensuring all people can access reproductive health care, including abortion, no matter how much money they make, where they were born or live, their age, their immigration status, their race, or their sex (including sexual orientation and gender identity). Over the last four years, the Trump Administration systematically undermined access to sexual and reproductive health care, both domestically and globally. The right to control one’s reproductive autonomy has been attacked, making it harder for people in the United States and around the world to receive essential health services.

Reversing these harms must be a top priority for the new Biden Administration. But simply reverting to where things were in 2016 is not enough. We must ensure that *all* people— both at home and abroad—truly have sexual and reproductive autonomy. Advancing sexual and reproductive rights and justice will not only promote health, but help make progress toward a safer, equitable world. During your campaign you committed to repeal the Hyde amendment and you continue to affirm your support for sexual and reproductive health and rights in the United States, as well as globally.

We are respectfully requesting that you eliminate the Hyde Amendment, the Weldon Amendment, the Helms Amendment, and other similar abortion coverage restrictions from your Fiscal Year 2022 budget. The Hyde Amendment’s restrictions on coverage have a far-reaching impact on people enrolled in Medicaid and Medicare; federal employees and their dependents; Peace Corps Volunteers; Indigenous people; women in federal prisons and immigration detention centers; and residents of the District of Columbia. The Weldon Amendment has been attached to Hyde and used to

interfere with policies that expand abortion coverage and access. Opponents of abortion access, including the Trump Administration, have invoked the Weldon Amendment in attempts to block policies to expand abortion care and coverage by threatening policymakers with the loss of critical federal health dollars. Under the Helms Amendment, U.S. foreign assistance support for anything related to abortion remains restricted, denying people around the world the life-saving care that they want and need. Now is the time to end these harmful policies and we look forward to working with your administration to end this shameful legacy. A clean budget from you will send a signal to Congress that you agree abortion coverage bans and restrictions are harmful, unnecessary, and should be removed.

Reproductive health care, including abortion, continues to be under serious attack. Over the past decade, nearly 500 laws and restrictions have passed intended to limit abortion access. In 2019 alone, 12 U.S. states enacted 25 abortion bans, many of which would ban abortion before a person may know they are pregnant.¹ At least 10 states also exploited the COVID-19 pandemic by trying to restrict access to abortion and cut patients off from care.² The pandemic yet again showed the long-standing structural racism and inequities in our health care system, with communities of color, particularly those in the Black, Latinx, and Pacific Islander communities, and Indigenous people facing high rates of infection and death from COVID-19. These disproportionate effects can be largely traced to institutional racism and its impacts. We are ready to work with the Biden Administration to undo harmful abortion access policies that have only been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Additionally, as countries work to undo harmful abortion policies, the U.S. remains a barrier to people accessing comprehensive reproductive health care. Globally, there are more than 35 million unsafe abortions each year. Poor conditions and lack of access to effective care following unsafe abortions contributes to eight percent of maternal deaths.³ The Helms Amendment exacerbates this crisis by putting safe abortion care out of reach for those served by U.S. foreign assistance, including through global health, gender-based violence, and humanitarian programs.

We urge you to begin your presidency with a clear statement that discriminatory abortion coverage bans and restrictions have no place in our public policy by eliminating

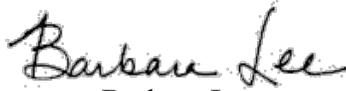
¹ Nash, E., Mohammed, L., Cappello, E., Naide, O. (2019). State Policy Trends 2019: A Wave of Abortion Bans, But Some States Are Fighting Back. Guttmacher Institute. Retrieved from: <https://www.guttmacher.org/article/2019/12/state-policy-trends-2019-wave-abortion-bans-some-states-are-fighting-back>.

² Cappello O, Surveying State Executive Orders Impacting Reproductive Health During the COVID-19 Pandemic, New York: Guttmacher Institute: 2020, <https://www.guttmacher.org/article/2020/07/surveying-state-executive-orders-impacting-reproductive-health-during-covid-19>.

³ Sully EA et al., Adding It Up: Investing in Sexual and Reproductive Health 2019, New York: Guttmacher Institute, 2020, <https://www.guttmacher.org/report/adding-it-up-investing-in-sexual-reproductive-health-2019>

all such restrictions from your FY 2022 budget. This will send a strong message to Congress, the country, and the world that everyone should be able to decide when and how to start a family— regardless of how much money they make, the type of insurance they have, or where they live.

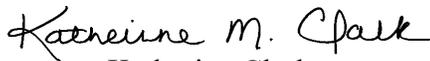
Sincerely,



Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



Diana DeGette
Member of Congress



Katherine Clark
Member of Congress



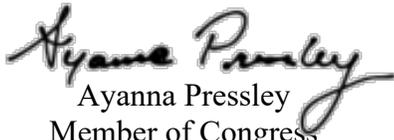
Senator Patty Murray



Suzan DelBene
Member of Congress



Senator Tammy Duckworth



Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress



Senator Jeanne Shaheen



Lois Frankel
Member of Congress



Senator Ron Wyden



Jackie Speier
Member of Congress



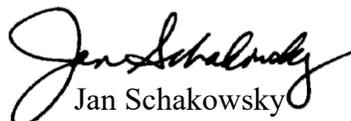
Senator Richard Blumenthal



Brenda L. Lawrence
Member of Congress



Senator Margaret Wood Hassan

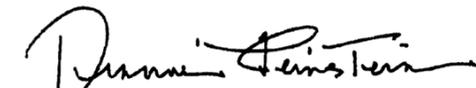


Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

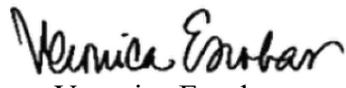


Senator Mazie K. Hirono


Julia Brownley
Member of Congress


Senator Dianne Feinstein


Judy Chu
Member of Congress


Veronica Escobar
Member of Congress


Norma J. Torres
Member of Congress


Rosa L. DeLauro
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Theodore E. Deutch
Member of Congress