

Coalition Statement Opposing Reinstatement of the Global Gag Rule 2015

We join together as diverse voices from a variety of sectors to oppose any effort to reinstate the harmful global gag rule, also known as the Mexico City Policy. While the Helms Amendment restricts U.S. foreign assistance funding for abortions “as a method of family planning,” the global gag rule goes a step further by preventing foreign organizations using their own funds to provide information, referrals, or services for legal abortion or to advocate for access to abortion services in their own country from receiving U.S. international family planning assistance.

The global gag rule causes serious harm in countries around the world. The policy interferes with the doctor-patient relationship by restricting medical information healthcare providers may offer, limits free speech by prohibiting local citizens from participating in public policy debates, and impedes women’s access to family planning by cutting off funding for many of the most experienced health care providers who have chosen to prioritize quality reproductive-health services and counseling over funding that restricts care and censors information.

When in place, the negative impacts of the global gag rule have been broad and severe: health services have been dismantled in a number of communities; clinics that provided a range of reproductive, maternal, and child health care, including HIV testing and counseling, were forced to close; outreach efforts to hard to reach populations were eliminated; and access to contraceptives was severely limited, resulting in more unintended pregnancies and more unsafe abortions. Here is the testimony of one organization that experienced the impact of the global gag rule when it was last in place:

“After refusing the terms of the gag rule in 2001, at Family Health Options Kenya we lost a significant amount of funding from USAID with serious and damaging effects on our ability to provide crucial reproductive health and family planning services. We were forced to close six clinics, all of which provided critical services to poor and underserved populations in urban, peri-urban and rural areas including family planning, voluntary counseling and testing for HIV, management of sexually transmitted infections, post-abortion care and maternal and child health services. Following the closure of these clinics in 2005, at least 9,000 people – primarily women and children – were left with little or no access to health care.” - FHOK, 2013

Countries around the world are making significant progress in improving women’s health and bringing back this harmful policy would undermine that momentum. Developing and donor countries alike are stepping up to prioritize and make tangible headway in closing the gap on access to modern family planning through increased funding and better policies. This momentum, which includes global partnerships like Family Planning 2020, builds on the essential foundation of U.S. investments in this sector. A reinstatement of the gag rule would seriously hinder the effectiveness of U.S. global health investments and the growing global progress that we, as a global community, have made in expanding access to family planning for couples worldwide and in reducing maternal mortality.

The U.S. should be a leader when it comes to promoting democracy, women’s health, and human rights around the world. U.S. foreign aid should never be used as a tool to limit women’s access to health care or to censor free speech. Organizations should not be disqualified from receiving U.S. assistance because they use their own funds to provide health services and information that are legal in their home country and legal in the U.S. **Supporters of women’s health and free speech must oppose the harmful global gag rule and we call on Congress to reject all efforts to again impose this policy on women around the world.**

Endorsing Organizations:

1. 30 for 30 Campaign
2. Advocates for Youth
3. AIDS Foundation of Chicago
4. AIDS United
5. Alliance to End Slavery & Trafficking
6. American Academy of Pediatrics
7. American Association of University Women (AAUW)
8. American Civil Liberties Union
9. American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
10. American Humanist Association
11. American Jewish World Service
12. American Medical Student Association
13. amfAR (The Foundation for AIDS Research)
14. Amnesty International USA
15. Anti-Defamation League
16. Association of Reproductive Health Professionals
17. AVAC
18. Black Women's Health Imperative
19. Breakthrough
20. carafem
21. CARE USA
22. Catholics for Choice
23. Center for Biological Diversity
24. Center for Health and Gender Equity (CHANGE)
25. Center for Inquiry
26. Center for Reproductive Rights
27. Center for Women Policy Studies
28. Colorado Organization for Latina Opportunity and Reproductive Rights (COLOR)
29. Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health
30. Consortium of Universities for Global Health
31. Disciple Public Witness; Disciples of Christ
32. Disciples for Choice
33. Disciples Justice Action Network
34. DKT International
35. Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation
36. EngenderHealth
37. Family Care International
38. Feminist Majority
39. Global Doctors for Choice
40. Global Health Council
41. Global Youth Coalition on HIV/AIDS (GYCA)
42. Health GAP
43. Gynuity Health Projects
44. Healthy Teen Network
45. Human Rights Campaign
46. Human Rights Watch
47. HIV Medicine Association
48. Ibis Reproductive Health
49. Institute for Science and Human Values
50. International Center for Research on Women
51. International Medical Corps
52. International Planned Parenthood Federation
53. International Planned Parenthood/Western Hemisphere Region
54. International Women's Health Coalition
55. IntraHealth International
56. Ipas
57. John Snow, Inc.
58. JWI
59. Law Students for Reproductive Justice
60. Lutheran Women's Caucus
61. Management Sciences for Health
62. Marie Stopes International-US
63. Medical Students for Choice
64. Methodist Federation for Social Action
65. NARAL Pro-Choice America
66. National Abortion Federation
67. National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF)
68. National Center for Lesbian Rights
69. National Center for Transgender Equality
70. National Council of Jewish Women
71. National Family Planning & Reproductive Health Association
72. National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health
73. National LGBTQ Task Force
74. National Organization for Women
75. National Partnership for Women & Families
76. National Women's Law Center
77. Outright Action International
78. PAI
79. Partners for Development
80. PATH
81. Pathfinder International
82. People For The American Way
83. Physicians for Reproductive Health
84. Planned Parenthood Federation of America
85. Population Connection Action Fund
86. Population Council
87. Population Institute
88. Population Services International
89. Positive Women's Network - USA
90. Public Health Institute
91. Religious Institute
92. Reproductive Health Technologies Project
93. Republican Majority for Choice

94. Secular Coalition for America
95. Sexuality Information and Education Council of the U.S. (SIECUS)
96. Sierra Club
97. SisterLove, Inc.
98. Society for Humanistic Judaism
99. The Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice
100. Treatment Action Group
101. Union for Reform Judaism
102. Unitarian Universalist Association
103. Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation

104. United Methodist General Board of Church & Society
105. URGE: Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equity
106. WaterAid
107. WIN (Women's Information Network)
108. Women at the Center
109. Women of Reform Judaism
110. Women Thrive Worldwide
111. Women's Refugee Commission
112. Women's Research & Education Institute