March 5, 2013

The Honorable Barbara A. Mikulski
Chair
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
Room S 128, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Richard C. Shelby
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
Room S 146A, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Harold Rogers
Chair
U.S. House Committee on Appropriations
Room H-307, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nita M. Lowey
Ranking Member
U.S. House Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman Mikulski, Ranking Member Shelby, Chairman Rogers, and Ranking Member Lowey:

As national organizations committed to women's health, we are writing in response to ongoing efforts by opponents of women's health to undermine the contraceptive coverage provision in the Affordable Care Act. As you work to craft a measure to fund the federal government past March 27 and through fiscal year 2013, we stand in opposition to any language that will weaken the Affordable Care Act's contraceptive coverage provision in any continuing resolution or omnibus appropriations measure.

As you know, the Affordable Care Act included a historic investment in prevention, including a provision requiring health insurers offering individual or group health plans to cover certain preventive health care services, including contraceptive services, with no cost-sharing to the individual. Because of this landmark provision of the law, women will have insurance coverage for the full-range of FDA-approved contraceptive methods, including a range of birth control pills, emergency contraception (which the medical and scientific community, including the FDA, has clearly established is a form of contraception and not an abortifacient as it has no impact on an existing pregnancy), the ring, the patch, the shot, implants, hormonal intrauterine devices, non-hormonal intrauterine devices, and barrier methods. As part of the implementation of the ACA, the Obama Administration recently released a proposed rule clarifying that, regardless of where a woman works, she will have access to birth control without cost-sharing.

Public opinion polling finds overwhelming support for women's access to birth control. Seven in ten Americans (70%) believe that health insurance companies should be required to cover the full cost of birth control, just as they do for other preventive services, according to an October 2012 poll by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy.

Additionally, the October 2012 Contraceptive CHOICE study led by the Washington University Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology demonstrated that access to birth control counseling, drugs, and devices without cost-sharing — as promised in the Affordable Care Act — leads to significantly lower rates of unintended pregnancy. Further, contraception is directly linked to improved maternal and infant health. When women plan their pregnancies, they are more likely to access prenatal care, ultimately improving their own health and the health of their children.

Including language in a continuing resolution or omnibus appropriations measure to restrict women's access to birth control would be bad policy and is contrary to our shared goals of improving women's

health. We respectfully urge you to reject efforts to politicize the appropriations process for the remainder of fiscal year 2013 and oppose riders that are harmful to women's health.

Sincerely,

Advocates for Youth
American Association of University Women (AAUW)
American Civil Liberties Union
American Medical Student Association
Association of Reproductive Health Professionals
Black Women's Health Imperative
Catholics for Choice
Center for Reproductive Rights
Coalition of Labor Union Women
Feminist Majority
Jewish Women International
NAACP
NARAL Pro-Choice America
National Abortion Federation
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum
National Congress of Black Women, Inc
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council of Women's Organizations
National Family Planning & Reproductive Health Association
National Health Law Program
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health
National Organization for Women (NOW)
National Partnership for Women & Families
National Women's Health Network
National Women's Law Center
Physicians for Reproductive Health
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
Population Connection
Raising Women's Voices for the Health Care We Need
Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice
Reproductive Health Technologies Project
Sexuality Information and Education Council of the U.S. (SIECUS)
The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy
The United Methodist Church, General Board of Church & Society
Third Way
Unitarian Universalist Association
Women's Research & Education Institute
YWCA USA