

January 26, 2018

United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator,

We, the undersigned national faith-based and religious groups, urge you to oppose S. 2311 and similar measures that restrict women's access to safe, legal abortion. We stand united across our faith traditions in opposing measures like S. 2311. This extreme legislation would block a woman's access to safe healthcare and deny her the ability to make decisions according to her own beliefs and conscience. The decision to end a pregnancy must be left to an individual woman in consultation with her family, doctors and any others she chooses to involve—in keeping with her personal faith beliefs—rather than imposed on her by federal law.

The religious values that guide our organizations call us to demonstrate compassion for any woman or family facing difficult circumstances related to pregnancy. As a woman makes this decision for herself and her family, we believe that it is neither our role—nor the government's—to stand in judgment. Our religious values call us to offer compassion, support and respect for a woman facing this decision and for her family. Our lawmakers must ensure that every person has safe and legal access to whatever care she feels is necessary and best in her situation. Each woman is a moral agent who deserves dignity and respect. It is critical that every woman has as much time as she needs to make the right decision for herself and her family.

Bans on abortion after an arbitrary gestational limit—whether 20 weeks as S. 2311 imposes or any other proposed restrictions on access to services—will only make a challenging situation worse. Indeed, when a woman is denied a later abortion the consequences on her life and her family can be far-reaching, impacting health, economic security and wellbeing. Healthcare that does not include access to later abortion does not completely serve the economic, medical or emotional needs of women or our society as a whole.

Our religious values also compel us to advocate for policies that empower the most marginalized in our communities. Whenever bans or other severe restrictions to abortion are enacted, those most negatively affected are women without the financial resources to access safe care. We stand with women who find themselves in difficult situations, and therefore we oppose policies, such as later abortion bans, that will disproportionately and unjustly compound the difficulties of families in our communities that are already struggling to make ends meet.

Naturally, people in this country have differing religious views on issues of pregnancy and parenting, including abortion. Freedom of belief is a core principle of our American democracy. However, legislation like S. 2311 that would limit access to abortion care has the practical effect of imposing one particular religious belief on all people. Such an imposition does not reflect the religious freedom protections that are guaranteed to every individual by the Constitution.

The proper role of government in the United States is not to privilege one set of religious views over others but to protect each person's right and ability to make decisions according to their own beliefs and values.

Again, we urge you to oppose this extreme legislation and any bans on abortion based on arbitrary gestational limits. Such legislation blocks women's access to safe healthcare options and unjustly denies them the freedom to make decisions according to their own beliefs and conscience. Instead, we ask that you support policies that show compassion for women and families, no matter their circumstances, and respect for every individual's religious liberty.

In faith,

A Critical Mass: Women Celebrating Eucharist	Muslims for Progressive Values
Anti-Defamation League	National Coalition of American Nuns (NCAN)
Bend the Arc Jewish Action	National Council of Jewish Women
Catholics for Choice	Presbyterians Affirming Reproductive Options
Central Conference of American Rabbis	Presbyterian Feminist Agenda Network
Chicago Women-Church	Presbyterian Voices for Justice
Clergy Advocacy Board of Planned Parenthood Federation of America	Reconstructionist Rabbinical College and Jewish Reconstructionist Communities
Concerned Clergy for Choice	Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice
Disciples for Choice	Religious Institute
Disciples Justice Action Network	Society for Humanistic Judaism
Episcopal Women's Caucus	Union for Reform Judaism
Global Justice Institute	Unitarian Universalist Association
Hadassah, The Women's Zionist Organization of America, Inc.	Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation
Jewish Alliance for Law and Social Action	United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
Jewish Women International	Western Methodist Justice Movement
Keshet	Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual (WATER)
Methodist Federation for Social Action	Women's League for Conservative Judaism
Metropolitan Community Churches (MCC)	Women of Reform Judaism

For more information, please contact Glenn Northern, Catholics for Choice, at gnorthern@catholicsforchoice.org or (202)986-6093; or Carly Manes, National Council of Jewish Women, at Carly@ncjwdc.org or 202.375.5067