

July 13, 2015

The Honorable Harold Rodgers
Chair
U.S. House Committee on Appropriations
Room H-305, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

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

Dear Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Lowey,

We, the undersigned organizations that support the health and rights of immigrant women, write to express our strong opposition to proposals to restrict access to abortion for women in U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention. These proposals seek to impose, through a rider on the Homeland Security appropriations bill, a ban on coverage and provision of abortion services for individuals in ICE custody except in cases of rape, incest, and a very narrow definition of life endangerment. This language further chips away at access to abortion by allowing any ICE employee to refuse “to perform or facilitate in any way” any abortion.

Every woman should be able to access the health care she needs, including abortion, and no one should face political interference in their health care decisions, including while a woman is detained. This proposal is a politicized attack on health care access and decision-making for immigrant women.

The New York Times recently [editorialized](#) that, “Of all the malfunctioning parts in the country’s broken-down immigration machinery, probably the most indefensible is the detention system” for breeding “cruelty and harm” against detainees, including women and families. Proposals to limit access to abortion for immigrant women are cruel attacks on the ability of some of the most marginalized women in our society to make decisions about their health. Women in detention are separated from their children, their families, and their health care providers. The problems women face in detention have been well documented: pregnant women have been forced to give birth in shackles, some women have been denied HIV medication, and others have been sexually assaulted by guards. Advocates and policymakers have been working together to eliminate the reliance on jail-like detention, to set basic standards for health care, and to address the epidemic of sexual violence in detention centers. This new proposal undermines efforts underway to make our immigration system more humane, makes already dire circumstances even more difficult for women in federal immigration custody, and represents yet another harmful iteration of the Hyde Amendment which denies coverage of abortion to those who are qualified and enrolled in Medicaid.

Additionally, these proposals include a harsh restriction on abortion access by including broad exemptions for ICE employees who refuse to comply with the law. Allowing any individual ICE employee to refrain from “facilitating in any way” abortion dangerously jeopardizes the health of women in detention. Although proponents of the policy rider suggest that it just reinforces the current policy restriction on funds administered by the Department of Justice, the additional refusal provisions make this an even more extreme attack on women’s health. Under

this proposal, an ICE employee could refuse to participate in emergency transportation for appropriate medical care, endangering women's lives and health.

We respectfully urge you to oppose these unjust restrictions on women's reproductive decision making. Immigrant women's health should never be used as a political bargaining chip.

Sincerely,

9to5

Advocates for Youth

American Civil Liberties Union

American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

American Medical Student Association

Catholics for Choice

Center for Reproductive Rights

Center for Women Policy Studies

Hispanic Federation

Institute for Science and Human Values

Institute for Science and Human Values, Inc

Ipas

JWI

League of United Latin American Citizens

Methodist Federation for Social Action

NARAL Pro-Choice America

National Abortion Federation

National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum

National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda

National Center for Lesbian Rights

National Council of Jewish Women

National Family Planning & Reproductive Health Association

National Hispanic Media Coalition

National Immigration Law Center

National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health

National Network of Abortion Funds

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 Action Fund

Reform Immigration for Texas Alliance (RITA)

Reproductive Health Technologies Project
Secular Coalition for America
The Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice
URGE: Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equity
We Belong Together

Cc: Members of the House Appropriations Committee