

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20004

December 17, 2021

Re: Call for Executive Action to Support Helms Amendment Repeal

Dear President Biden,

We, the undersigned organizations, call on you to protect reproductive freedom and bodily autonomy for people across the globe by demonstrating your support for the repeal of the Helms Amendment. Failure to do so is in direct conflict with the priorities stated by this administration to “promote access to sexual and reproductive health and rights both at home and abroad.” We urge you to proactively protect essential human rights, including abortion, for people in other countries as well as our own. We appreciate the actions you have taken in support of sexual and reproductive health and rights, including repealing the Global Gag Rule and calling for increased UNFPA funding. However, simply reversing harm inflicted by the previous administration is not enough to make meaningful progress on health and human rights.

We write to you on this day specifically because it is the 48th anniversary of the passage of the Helms Amendment, which prohibits U.S. foreign aid from being used for “the performance of abortion as a method of family planning.” This provision is over-implemented as a total ban on abortion under any circumstance, denying millions of mostly Black and brown people in low-to-middle income countries the health care they want and need. Authored by the late Sen. Jesse Helms, this policy has roots in racism and neocolonialism, allowing the U.S. to police other countries through the power of foreign assistance and control their policies even in instances where countries have expanded abortion access. The result is drastic global health inequities, stifled bodily autonomy, and preventable death.

Last year, many of us called on your administration to support the *Abortion is Health Care Everywhere Act*, which repeals the Helms Amendment. The *Abortion is Health Care Everywhere Act* now has over 170 cosponsors and is endorsed by a diverse coalition of over 175 organizations. The Helms Amendment was also successfully removed from the House-passed Fiscal Year 2022 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs appropriations bill. Despite growing momentum for repeal of the Helms Amendment, it remained in the FY22 President’s Budget and was not addressed in the recently released National Strategy on Gender Equity and Equality, both missed opportunities to ensure bodily autonomy for people globally, no matter who they are or where they live.

Today, one year later, our asks of your administration are more urgent than ever. Increases in state legislation restricting reproductive freedom, coupled with the current Supreme Court case, *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization*, which threatens *Roe v. Wade* and abortion access domestically, as well as a growing global anti-rights movement, make the need to protect sexual and reproductive rights critical. And while your administration works to protect the constitutional right to abortion domestically, it must also rigorously defend and uphold the right to abortion care for people outside the U.S. Therefore we urge you to signal your support for proactive repeal of the Helms Amendment from the Foreign

Assistance Act by supporting the Abortion is Health Care Everywhere Act and striking the Helms Amendment from the upcoming FY23 President’s Budget.

While ending abortion restrictions in U.S. foreign assistance is one of the many steps necessary to protect the right to health care, including meaningful access to sexual and reproductive health care globally, it is critical to end the damage of racist and neocolonialist policies like the Helms amendment that have plagued communities for decades. U.S. politicians have controlled the lives and bodies of people living thousands of miles away for 48 years too long.

Abortion Access Front	Human Rights Campaign	Physicians for Reproductive Health
Abortion Liberation Fund of PA	Human Rights Watch	Planned Parenthood Federation of America
Advocates for Youth	Ibis Reproductive Health	Population Connection Action Fund
Advocating Opportunity	IKAR	Population Council
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists	In Our Own Voice: National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda	Population Institute
American Humanist Association	International Action Network for Gender Equity & Law (IANGEL)	Population Services International (PSI)
American Jewish World Service	International Center for Advocates Against Discrimination (ICAAD)	Positive Women's Network-USA
American Medical Student Association	International Center for Research on Women (ICRW)	Provide
Amnesty International USA	International Women's Convocation	Reconstructing Judaism
Beyond the Bans Colorado	Ipas	Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association
Black Women’s Health Imperative	Jacobs Institute of Women's Health	Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice
California Latinas for Reproductive Justice	John Snow, Inc. (JSI)	Reproaction
Catholics for Choice	Keshet	Reproductive Health Access Project
Center for American Progress	Last Mile4D	Reproductive Health Network Kenya
Center for Biological Diversity	Legal Voice	SHIP

Center for Reproductive Rights	Lift Louisiana	SIECUS: Sex Ed for Social Change
Clearinghouse on Women's Issues	MADRE	SisterLove, Inc
Coalition of Labor Union Women	Management Sciences for Health	SisterReach
Cobalt	Medical Students for Choice	SisterSong: National Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective
Collective Power for Reproductive Justice	MenEngage Alliance	SlutwalkNOLA.org
Colorado Organization for Latina Opportunity and Reproductive Rights (COLOR)	Metrics for Management	Society for Humanistic Judaism
Council for Global Equality	MSI United States	Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine
Creative Community League	NARAL Pro-Choice America	Tewa Women United
Desiree Alliance	National Abortion Federation	The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries
End Rape On Campus	National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF)	The Global Justice Institute
Equal Asia Foundation (Stichting EqualA Foundation)	National Association of Social Workers	The Womxn Project (TWP)
Every Mother Counts	National Birth Equity Collaborative	Together for Girls
Feminist Majority Foundation	National Center for Lesbian Rights	Treatment Action Group
Fòs Feminista	National Center for Transgender Equality	UltraViolet
Freedom Network USA	National Council of Jewish Women	Union for Reform Judaism
Friends of the Earth	National Health Law Program	United State of Women
Funders Concerned About AIDS	National Institute for Reproductive Health	URGE: Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equity
Global Justice Center	National Network of Abortion Funds	We Testify
Global Justice Institute, Metropolitan Community Churches	National Organization for Women	White Ribbon Alliance
Global Network of Black People working in HIV	North American Society of Pediatric and Adolescent Gynecology	Women Enabled International

Global Woman P.E.A.C.E. Foundation	Nurses for Sexual & Reproductive Health (NSRH)	Women Have Options/ Ohio
Guttmacher Institute	OutRight Action International	Women of Reform Judaism
Health GAP	PAI	Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO)
Heartland Alliance International	Pathfinder International	Women's Refugee Commission
Hispanic Federation		Woodhull Freedom Foundation

CC:

Kamala D. Harris, Vice President

Anthony J. Blinken, Secretary of State

Samantha Power, Administrator, US Agency for International Development

Jennifer Klein, Co-Chair and Executive Director of the Gender Policy Council

Shilpa Phadke, Deputy Director of the Gender Policy Council

Rachel Vogelstein, Senior Advisor, Gender Policy Council

Kalisha Figures, Special Assistant to the President for Gender Policy