

The Honorable Antony Blinken Secretary  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, D.C. 20520

The Honorable Samantha Power Administrator  
U.S. Agency for International Development  
Ronald Reagan Building  
Washington, D.C. 20523

August 10, 2022

Dear Secretary Blinken and Administrator Power,

As organizations dedicated to protecting and expanding global reproductive health, rights, and justice, including abortion access, we are heartened to hear that you maintain an unwavering commitment to sexual and reproductive health care.<sup>1</sup> The recent *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* Supreme Court decision is a public health emergency that has and will continue to threaten the health and lives of people seeking essential health care services, not just for those in the U.S. but also for people globally. We are glad to see those in USAID and the State Department recognizing and calling out the devastation that this decision will bring worldwide and reaffirming your commitment to protect and care for those you serve.

We look forward to working alongside you in this critical endeavor towards reproductive freedom, bodily autonomy, and dignity for people worldwide. We encourage you to start meeting this commitment ***today*** by authorizing USAID reproductive health funding to the full extent of the law. Under current law, U.S. foreign assistance may not be used for abortion services as a means of family planning.<sup>2</sup> This requirement, however, still allows USAID and the State Department to provide funding for abortion services in cases of rape, incest, and life endangerment.<sup>3</sup> It also allows for abortion service information and counseling.<sup>4</sup> However, USAID and the State Department do not and have never funded abortion services in these circumstances - even though they can do so without breaching any congressionally imposed limits on abortion funding.

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<sup>1</sup> [Samantha Power Twitter June 27, 2022](#); Antony Blinken, [Today's Supreme Court Decision](#), June 24, 2022

<sup>2</sup> Helms Amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961

<sup>3</sup> Id.

<sup>4</sup> Leahy Amendment to annual foreign operations appropriations acts since FY1995

Additionally, many organizations receiving U.S. assistance lack proper guidance from USAID and the State Department on the scope of the law and unduly limit the care they provide in fear of falling afoul of U.S. funding restrictions. Specifically they are afraid that if they offer abortion information or counseling, or provide abortion care in cases of rape, incest, and life endangerment, they will lose all their U.S. funding. In practice, this means that people are frequently denied often life-saving health information and that many victims of sexual assault and incest in medical emergencies are deprived of legal and necessary health care.

For too long, the U.S. government has restricted the reproductive healthcare offered to people in countries receiving foreign assistance, regardless of the legality of abortion care in those countries. Domestically, women and other people capable of pregnancy have been stripped of a fundamental right and you have rightly expressed your disappointment at this rollback. USAID and the State Department can take tangible steps to mitigate the harmful global impacts of the Supreme Court ruling, immediately, by clarifying the exceptions to U.S. restrictions on abortion funding.

Actions that USAID and the State Department can take to demonstrate a commitment to reproductive health, rights, and justice:

1. Issue clarifying guidance to grantees on what is permissible under the law: that U.S. foreign assistance can be used to provide information and counseling on abortion consistent with local law and abortion services in cases of rape, incest and life endangerment.
2. Revise the Standard Provision on the Helms and Leahy Amendments using affirmative language to make clear what is permissible, not only what is prohibited.
3. Amend the USAID Family Planning and Abortion Requirements Compliance Training for greater clarity and participant comprehension.

We look forward to seeing bold action to support and protect global reproductive health and rights, including abortion access, and working with you towards a future where we all have the freedom to control our own bodies, safely care for our families, and live with dignity.

Sincerely,

Ipas

Global Justice Center

Abortion Access Front

Abortion Liberation Fund of PA

Aidsfonds

All Souls Movement

American Humanist Association

American Jewish World Service

Association for Farmers Rights Defense, AFRD

Australasian Sexual and Reproductive Health Alliance

AVAC

California Latinas for Reproductive Justice

Catholics for Choice

Center for Biological Diversity

Center for Reproductive Rights

Center for Women's Global Leadership

Clearinghouse on Women's Issues

Coalition of Labor Union Women

Cobalt

Collective Power for Reproductive Justice

Colorado Organization for Latina Opportunity and Reproductive Rights

Council for Global Equality

Creative Community League

Desiree Alliance

End Rape On Campus

Equimundo: Center for Masculinities and Social Justice (Formerly Promundo-US)

Every Mother Counts

Feminist Majority Foundation

Fòs Feminista

Freedom Network USA

Friends of the Earth United States

Funders Concerned About AIDS

Global Fund for Women

Global Network of Black People working in HIV

Global Rights for Women

Global Woman P.E.A.C.E. Foundation

Guttmacher Institute

Gynuity Health Projects

Heartland Alliance International

Hispanic Federation

Human Rights Campaign

Ibis Reproductive Health

ICAAD (International Center for Advocates Against Discrimination)

If/When/How: Lawyering for Reproductive Justice

IKAR

International Action Network for Gender Equity & Law (IANGEL)

International Center for Research on Women (ICRW)

International Women's Convocation

IPPF - International Planned Parenthood Federation

Jacobs Institute of Women's Health

Jewish Women International (JWI)

Keshet

Last Mile4D

League of Women Voters of the United States

Legal Voice

Lift Louisiana

Louisiana Coalition for Reproductive Freedom

MenEngage Global Alliance

Metropolitan Community Churches, Global Justice Institute

MPact Global Action

MSI Reproductive Choices

NARAL Pro-Choice America

National Abortion Federation

National Birth Equity Collaborative

National Center for Lesbian Rights

National Center for Transgender Equality

National Council of Jewish Women

National Health Law Program

National Institute for Reproductive Health

New Voices for Reproductive Justice

North American Society for Pediatric and Adolescent Gynecology

OutRight Action International

Oxfam America

PAI

Pathfinder International

Planned Parenthood Federation of America

Population Institute

Population Services International (PSI)

Prevention Access Campaign - U=U

Provide

Reconstructing Judaism

Refugees International

Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice

Reproaction

Reproductive Health Access Project

Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists

SisterReach

Society for Humanistic Judaism

Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine

Sunita Jain Anti-Trafficking Initiative

The Womxn Project

Treatment Action Group

UltraViolet

Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation

United State of Women

Universal Access Project

We Testify

White Ribbon Alliance

Win Without War

Women Deliver

Women for Afghan Women

Women Graduates-USA

Women of Reform Judaism

Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO)

Women's Refugee Commission

CC:

Secretary Xavier Becerra, Department of Health and Human Services

Jennifer Klein, White House Gender Policy Council