

**House Foreign Affairs Committee
Members Day
Nita M. Lowey Testimony
December 11, 2019**

Chairman Engel, Ranking Member McCaul, and my fellow colleagues, thank you for permitting me to submit a written statement for the record on the Global Gag Rule and the critical importance of marking up H.R. 1055, the Global Health, Empowerment and Rights (HER) Act.

As one of the first acts of his presidency, President Trump quickly imposed the dangerous, ill-informed Global Gag Rule, which cuts off U.S. global health funding to any foreign nongovernmental organization that provides services for, information about, or referrals for abortion, or advocates for abortion access, even where it is legal, and even with its own private funds. A few months later, the Administration radically expanded the policy to apply to all global health funding, affecting approximately \$8.8 billion in U.S. assistance to programs tackling HIV/AIDS; family planning and reproductive health; tuberculosis; malaria; maternal and child health; water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH); and more. And just this year, the Administration announced it was expanding the Executive Order once again, changing the definition of “providing financial support” contained within the standard provisions of the policy.

When the Global Gag Rule was only applied to family planning programs in past implementations, we have seen the disastrous impacts on men, women, and children. Fewer women were able to access family planning services, resulting in more unintended pregnancies and abortions. Some of our most trusted implementation partners overseas were forced to choose between receiving U.S. funding or providing comprehensive health care, often leaving thousands of women without access to the most experienced providers.

With the Administration’s unprecedented expansions, which were implemented with no analysis of the potential impacts, it has now risked multiplying these impacts. We have heard reports of numerous HIV/AIDS, maternal and child health, and water, sanitation, and hygiene programs that have been forced to close their doors because of this policy. Meanwhile, implementers have tied themselves in knots trying to comply with the policy or, even worse, just walked away from partnering with the U.S. altogether. And mass confusion about the policy has led to a chilling effect, causing organizations to unnecessarily change or eliminate vital health services.

Now is the time for us to advance progress on U.S. global health goals, not reverse the gains we’ve made. That is why I hope the House Foreign Affairs Committee will take the significant step of marking up H.R. 1055, the Global HER Act, which would permanently end this devastating policy once and for all. Consideration of the Global HER Act will send a significant signal to international global health partners, as well as other countries, that the House of Representatives is committed to maintaining the U.S. role as a global health leader and to helping men, women, and children access lifesaving health care services. Thank you.