

March 1, 2016

Select Investigative Panel of the Energy and Commerce Committee
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Members of the Select Panel,

We, the 31 undersigned national faith-based and religious groups, stand with the organizations and individual healthcare professionals that provide women with quality medical services and comprehensive reproductive care, including abortion. Representing millions of people of faith committed to ensuring women's health and moral autonomy, we are deeply troubled by the latest deplorable attacks on the providers of a legal medical procedure. We urge you to end the investigation into abortion providers and turn your efforts to protecting a woman's ability to make her own faith-informed decisions about her health and her access to safe care.

As people of diverse faith traditions, we understand the myriad beliefs and moral complexity that exist on issues of reproductive health—abortion in particular. In keeping with our nation's principle of religious liberty, we respect the right of each individual to hold their own beliefs. However we feel about abortion, it is not our place to interfere in a woman's personal decision. It is also not the place of legislators to interfere by seeking to push safe, legal abortion out of reach, yet that is the goal of the deceptive campaign advanced by the Center for Medical Progress. The smear campaign videos and specious claims against abortion providers were created using dishonest and possibly illegal tactics and have been widely discredited. By validating this smear campaign, we believe the Select Panel will provoke vitriol rather than further productive discourse. It shows a disturbing lack of concern for women's health and safety, wastes taxpayer dollars and is simply another tactic to eliminate vital health options for women.

The truth is, fetal tissue research has been deemed appropriate public policy, receiving strong bipartisan support in the past. If a woman makes the compassionate decision to donate fetal tissue to support life-saving medical research, her decision should be respected and accommodated when possible. Fetal tissue donated for use in critical biomedical research has led to critical breakthroughs and is currently helping find cures for diseases like Parkinson's and Alzheimer's.

Our organizations share a faith-centered commitment to the most marginalized and the most vulnerable of our society, including those with limited financial means or those who live in areas with limited access to healthcare and related services. Our organizations respect women's moral agency and are committed to the social good. We value compassion and feel obligated to protect women's health and well-being. We also value religious liberty, which upholds the right of each person to make their own faith-informed or conscience-based healthcare decisions.

As groups representing millions of people of faith—including those who access healthcare at local Planned Parenthood health centers, women's health clinics and from independent abortion providers across the country—we affirm our support for the incredible and necessary work of these caring health professionals. We call on you to reject the underhanded and dishonest attempts to discredit abortion providers by an organization with a singular goal: to deny access to critical reproductive health services.

As organizations of faith, we stand with those who provide women with comprehensive reproductive healthcare with compassion and consideration rather than judgment. As members of Congress committed to supporting the health and well-being of your constituents, we urge you to do the same.

Sincerely,

A Critical Mass: Women Celebrating Eucharist
Anti-Defamation League
Bend the Arc: A Jewish Partnership for Justice
Catholics for Choice
Central Conference of American Rabbis
Concerned Clergy for Choice
CORPUS
Episcopal Women's Caucus
Hadassah, The Women's Zionist Organization of America, Inc.
Hindu American Foundation
International Rabbinical Assembly
Jewish Alliance for Law and Social Action
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Jewish Women International
Keshet
Methodist Federation for Social Action
Muslims for Progressive Values
National Coalition of American Nuns (NCAN)
National Council of Jewish Women
New Ways Ministry
Reconstructionist Rabbinical College and Jewish Reconstructionist Communities
Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice
Religious Institute
Society for Humanistic Judaism
Union for Reform Judaism
Unitarian Universalist Association
Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation
Women of Reform Judaism
Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual (WATER)
Women's League for Conservative Judaism
Women's Rabbinic Network

For additional information on this letter, please contact Sara Hutchinson Ratcliffe, Catholic for Choice domestic program director, at shratcliffe@catholicsforchoice.org or 202-986-6093; or Amy Cotton, National Council of Jewish Women senior policy manager, at amy@ncjwdc.org or 202 375 5067.