

December 10, 2019

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Energy & Commerce
Subcommittee on Health
Washington DC, 20515

Dear Chairwoman Eshoo and Ranking Member Burgess:

We, the undersigned organizations, commend the Committee leadership for convening today's hearing on "Proposals to Achieve Universal Health Care Coverage." While the Affordable Care Act (ACA) made important progress in expanding access to quality, affordable health insurance for millions of people in the United States, persistent gaps remain. Research shows that, in particular, significant numbers of low-income women, women of color, and immigrant women are still uninsured or underinsured, and that these groups experience disparities in health care access and outcomes as a result. Cost, both premiums and cost sharing, remains a barrier for many, and gaps in covered benefits mean that many people – particularly women, LGBTQ people and people with disabilities – are still unable to access the health care services that they need.

Universal coverage proposals have the potential to remedy these barriers and gaps. And while there are many pathways to achieving universal coverage – whether through a single payer system, a public option, more competition among health plans or other strategies – we write today to express that **any proposal, in order to truly meet the health care needs of all people, must include comprehensive coverage for reproductive health care, including abortion care.**

Specifically, universal coverage proposals should explicitly include comprehensive coverage for abortion care – including both medication abortion and abortion procedures, as well as pre- and post-care – for all enrollees. Ensuring insurance coverage is foundational to recognizing that abortion care is in fact a component of basic health care, and is also necessary to foster better health and economic outcomes for individuals and their families.

Proposals must also provide coverage for the full range of reproductive health care services that people need, including contraception and related counseling; maternity, prenatal and postpartum care; gender-affirming health care; and fertility care. Proposals should enable people to seek care in the setting and with the providers that they trust and that can help them achieve the health outcomes they desire. And all people should receive health care that is free of shame, stigma, bias and discrimination – and health care entities must continue to be prohibited from discriminating based on an individual's race, sex – including gender identity and sexual orientation – ethnicity, national origin, immigration status, language proficiency, disability, age, income, religion or health status. Universal coverage proposals should also prohibit the use of religion as a way to deny anyone, and particularly women and LGBTQ people, from receiving the care, information and coverage they need.

Again, we thank the Committee for holding this important hearing, and look forward to continuing to work with Members of Congress to ensure that comprehensive reproductive health care and coverage are foregrounded in their consideration of universal coverage proposals.

Sincerely,

Advocates for Youth

African American Ministers In Action

American Civil Liberties Union

American Society for Reproductive Medicine

Black Womens Health Imperative

Global Justice Center

In Our Own Voice: National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda

Jacobs Institute of Women's Health

Jewish Women International

NARAL Pro-Choice America

National Abortion Federation

National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF)

National Center for Lesbian Rights

National Council of Jewish Women

National Family Planning & Reproductive Health Association

National Health Law Program

National Institute for Reproductive Health (NIRH)

National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health

National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund

National Network of Abortion Funds

National Organization for Women

National Partnership for Women & Families

National Women's Law Center

National Women's Health Network

People For the American Way

Physicians for Reproductive Health

Planned Parenthood Federation of America

Positive Women's Network-USA

Power to Decide

Raising Women's Voices for the Health Care We Need

Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS)

Union for Reform Judaism

URGE: Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equity
Women of Reform Judaism