

# CATHOLICS FOR CHOICE

IN GOOD CONSCIENCE

February 12, 2020

The Honorable Frank Pallone  
Chair  
House Committee on Energy & Commerce  
2125 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Anna Eshoo  
Chair  
House Committee on Energy & Commerce  
Subcommittee on Health  
2125 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Greg Walden  
Ranking Member  
House Committee on Energy & Commerce  
2322 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Michael Burgess  
Ranking Member  
House Committee on Energy & Commerce  
Subcommittee on Health  
2322 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

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Sara Hutchinson Ratcliffe

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Dear Representatives Pallone, Walden, Eshoo, Burgess and Members of the Subcommittee:

Catholics for Choice writes to express unequivocal support for the Women's Health Protection Act (H.R. 2975). Protecting safe, legal access to abortion is a moral imperative, rooted in our deeply-held belief in women's moral agency and religious liberty for all.

Catholics for Choice works to shape and advance sexual and reproductive ethics that reflect a commitment to women's well-being and their capacity of women to make moral decisions about their lives. We serve as a voice for the vast majority of the 70 million Catholics across the U.S. who support access to comprehensive reproductive health services, including abortion.

Support for The Women's Health Protection Act is an extension of our Catholic values—namely, reverence for individual conscience, commitment to social justice and respect for religious liberty. As Catholics, we are called to follow our consciences in all matters of moral decision-making and to respect the right of others to do the same. We believe that individuals are moral agents who have the capacity, right, and responsibility to make their own decisions. This includes a woman's right to make decisions about her reproductive healthcare, no matter her income, religious tradition, or zip-code. Similarly, qualified medical professionals whose values call them to provide abortion care deserve protection for their conscience-based decisions. Laws that limit the availability of abortion exact far-reaching health and economic consequences, erode constitutional rights, dishonor human dignity, and undermine the moral agency of those seeking—and those seeking to provide—compassionate reproductive healthcare.

The Women's Health Protection Act would enact protections on the federal level to safeguard access to high-quality care and to secure constitutional rights by ensuring each

person's freedom to make decisions about abortion according to their own conscience and without political interference. The bill would also safeguard the rights of individual health care providers seeking to administer quality care without burdensome restrictions designed simply to impede access rather than improve women's health outcomes.

Catholic social justice teachings require us to care for the poor and disenfranchised—for those living in poverty and in rural areas, people of color, LGBTQ people and young people. Our faith compels us to speak out for the right of every person to access comprehensive, affordable and equitable reproductive healthcare. A system that allows a woman's fundamental rights to vary by state is capricious and profoundly unjust, transforming our country into a map of "haves and have-nots." The Women's Health Protection Act restores equal justice by removing onerous, medically unnecessary barriers and guarantee access to abortion nationwide.

Catholics affirm that every person has a right to religious liberty, which is integrally bound to reproductive freedom. Religious liberty includes the right to follow one's own conscience in making critical, personal reproductive health decisions. Genuine religious freedom demands that no one religious viewpoint be imposed on all through civil law or regulation. Congress must work to ensure that the religious liberty guaranteed to each American is not compromised for political gain by an influential minority—even, perhaps especially, when that minority claims a religious mantle as a justification for its actions.

Catholics for Choice supports the Women's Health Protection Act (H.R. 2975) and urges you and your colleagues to do the same.

Respectfully,



Sara Hutchinson Ratcliffe  
Acting President