

October 7, 2015

Dear Chairman Goodlatte and Ranking Member Conyers:

We write to you as organizations opposed to Congress' continued targeting of Planned Parenthood and women's health care, particularly abortion. The Judiciary Committee hearing scheduled for October 8, 2015, is just the latest in a series of coordinated attacks that have taken place since the House returned from its August recess. This myopic and dangerous focus on taking away women's access to critical health care must end.

Planned Parenthood is a leading provider of high-quality, affordable reproductive health care for women and men, including young people and low-income patients. Without Planned Parenthood, nearly three million people annually would lose access to their preferred provider for health care that includes birth control, cancer screenings, and STI screenings and treatment. Despite this, anti-women's health politicians have been attacking it for years. The latest round of attacks was prompted by the release of heavily-edited, deceptive videos that made false claims about Planned Parenthood.

Based on nothing more than these deceptive videos, some members of Congress are intent on defunding Planned Parenthood. In the last month alone, the House of Representatives has voted three times to defund it and three separate committees have convened hearings. All of this has amounted to nothing but political theater at its worst and is part of a broader political agenda to take away women's access to abortion.

No investigation has yielded any evidence to support the allegations. In fact, every investigation that has been completed has cleared Planned Parenthood of all wrongdoing.

This targeting of Planned Parenthood is just part of a larger systemic effort to deny women access to abortion. States have passed 282 restrictions on abortion in the past five years, and just this year alone, Congress has used the political process to try to undermine access to reproductive health care at least 75 times, including introducing and voting on multiple bills and amendments that would restrict women's health.

Abortion is an essential component of comprehensive reproductive health care. One in three women will have an abortion in her lifetime. It is one of the safest medical procedures: less than a quarter of one percent of abortions result in a major complication.¹ In fact, abortion has about the same rate of complications as colonoscopies. Women are safer and healthier when they have access to the full range of health care services.

¹ Upadhyay, Ushma D., Sheila Desai, Vera Zlidar, Tracy A. Weitz, Daniel Grossman, Patricia Anderson, and Diana Taylor. "Incidence of Emergency Department Visits and Complications After Abortion," *Obstetrics & Gynecology* 125, no. 1 (2015): 175-183; Weitz, Tracy A., Diana Taylor, Sheila Desai, Ushma D. Upadhyay, Jeff Waldman, Molly F. Battistelli, and Eleanor A. Drey. "Safety of aspiration abortion performed by nurse practitioners, certified nurse midwives, and physician assistants under a California legal waiver," *American Journal of Public Health* 103, no. 3 (2013): 454-461.

Moreover, the U.S. Constitution guarantees a woman's right to safe, legal abortion care. Yet many Members of Congress and state legislators appear eager to pass blatantly unconstitutional laws that are meant to push the legal boundaries of *Roe v. Wade*. They want to interfere in women's decision-making, tell health care providers how to practice medicine, disregard evidence based standards of care, and shame and judge women for having an abortion.

Despite the fact that abortion is a safe and legal medical procedure, anti-women's health politicians continue their efforts that disrespect women's autonomy and threaten their constitutional right to abortion. This week's hearing on Planned Parenthood is just more of the same. We urge the Committee to stop targeting those who provide or access this safe, legal, necessary care.

Sincerely,

Advocates for Youth
American Association of University Women (AAUW)
American Civil Liberties Union
Catholics for Choice
Center for Reproductive Rights
Feminist Majority Foundation
Ibis Reproductive Health
Institute for Science and Human Values, Inc.
Jewish Women International
Maryland Women's Coalition for Health Care Reform
NARAL Pro-Choice America
National Abortion Federation
National Center for Lesbian Rights
National Council of Jewish Women
National Family Planning & Reproductive Health Association
National Health Law Program
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health
National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund
National Network of Abortion Funds
National Partnership for Women & Families
National Women's Health Network
National Women's Law Center
People For the American Way
Physicians for Reproductive Health
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
Population Connection Action Fund
Population Institute
Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice
Reproductive Health Technologies Project

Sexuality Information and Education Council of the U.S. (SIECUS)
UltraViolet
URGE: Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equity