December 9, 2019

The Honorable Eliot Engel Chairman U.S. House Committee on Foreign Affairs 2170 Rayburn House Office Building Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Engel,

The undersigned 115 organizations request the House Committee on Foreign Affairs markup H.R. 1055, the Global Health, Empowerment, and Rights (HER) Act. The Global HER Act would end the harmful global gag rule, which has been radically expanded under the Trump Administration to apply to all U.S. global health assistance. This legislation, previously known as the Global Democracy Promotion Act, has been introduced and led by House Appropriations Chairwoman Nita Lowey for nearly 20 years, and currently has support from 188 co-sponsors in the House, bipartisan support in the Senate, and is endorsed by 114 diverse organizations.

The global gag rule limits the ability of foreign nongovernmental organizations to use their own funds to provide, refer, counsel or advocate for abortion in their own country as a condition of receiving U.S. global health funding. The radical and unprecedented expansion of the global gag rule under the current administration has only magnified the negative impact this policy has on the health and lives of communities worldwide, particularly women, girls, and LGBTQI people who are often the most marginalized in their countries. The global gag rule undercuts access to HIV/AIDS services, maternal health care, and contraception, contributing to more unintended pregnancies and more unsafe abortions. Research and data about previous iterations of the policy, as well as the current expanded global gag rule, point to the policy silencing public debate, rolling back progress on health and human rights, and disrupting a range of health services, often to the most vulnerable communities. By undermining the effectiveness of U.S. global health investments, the global gag rule hinders the ability to meet U.S. global health, development, and foreign policy goals.

Permanent repeal of the global gag rule via the Global HER Act would protect foreign nongovernmental organizations from being prohibited from receiving U.S. assistance based on their provision of counseling, referrals or medical services that are legal in the U.S. and the country in which they operate. This legislation would ensure that foreign nongovernmental organizations are treated fairly and afforded the same ability as U.S. organizations to engage in advocacy and lobbying activities with non-U.S. funding. While the House has considered language eliminating the global gag rule in recent appropriations bills, action from the Foreign Affairs Committee on the Global HER Act is imperative to permanently repeal the global gag rule and block any future administration from putting this harmful policy in place.

We thank you for your co-sponsorship and championship of the Global HER Act (H.R. 1055) to date. The pro-reproductive health majority in the House presents an unprecedented opportunity to advance this critical legislation which would promote health, human rights, civil society participation, and effective use of U.S. global health assistance. We look forward to working with you to markup and pass the Global HER Act to end the global gag rule once and for all.

Sincerely,

- 1. Advocates for Youth
- 2. Advocating Opportunity
- 3. African American Ministers In Action
- 4. American Civil Liberties Union
- 5. American Humanist Association
- 6. American Jewish World Service
- 7. American Medical Student Association
- 8. American Public Health Association
- 9. amfAR
- 10. Amnesty International USA
- 11. AVAC
- 12. CARE USA
- 13. Catholics for Choice
- 14. Center for Biological Diversity
- 15. Center for Inquiry
- 16. Center for International Policy
- 17. Center for Reproductive Rights
- 18. CHANGE
- 19. Consortium of Universities for Global Health
- 20. Council for Global Equality
- 21. CREDO
- 22. Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation
- 23. Endocrine Society
- 24. Equity Forward
- 25. Feminist Majority Foundation
- 26. Foreign Policy for America
- 27. Freedom Network USA
- 28. Funders Concerned About AIDS
- 29. Global Fund for Women
- 30. Global Health Council
- 31. Global Justice Center
- 32. Global Justice Institute, Metropolitan Community Church
- 33. Global Network of Black People working in HIV
- 34. Global Woman P.E.A.C.E. Foundation
- 35. Guttmacher Institute
- 36. Health GAP
- 37. Heartland Alliance International
- 38. Hispanic Federation
- 39. HIV Medicine Association
- 40. Human Rights Campaign
- 41. Human Rights Watch
- 42. Ibis Reproductive Health
- 43. If/When/How: Lawyering for Reproductive Justice
- 44. In Our Own Voice: National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda
- 45. Infectious Diseases Society of America
- 46. International Action Network for Gender Equity & Law
- 47. International Women's Convocation

- 48. International Women's Health Coalition
- 49. International Youth Alliance for Family Planning
- 50. IntraHealth International
- 51. Ipas
- 52. Jewish Women International
- 53. Jewish World Watch
- 54. John Snow, Inc. (JSI)
- 55. League of Women Voters of the United States
- 56. MADRE
- 57. Marie Stopes International
- 58. Medical Students for Choice
- 59. MPact Global Action for Gay Men's Health & Rights
- 60. NARAL Pro-Choice America
- 61. NASTAD
- 62. National Abortion Federation
- 63. National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF)
- 64. National Birth Equity Collaborative
- 65. National Center for Transgender Equality
- 66. National Council of Jewish Women
- 67. National Institute for Reproductive Health (NIRH)
- 68. National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health
- 69. National Organization for Women
- 70. National Partnership for Women & Families
- 71. National Women's Law Center
- 72. North American MenEngage Network
- 73. North American Society for Pediatric and Adolescent Gynecology
- 74. Not Without Black Women
- 75. Open Society Policy Center
- 76. OutRight Action International
- 77. PAI
- 78. Pathfinder International
- 79. People For the American Way
- 80. Physicians for Reproductive Health
- 81. Pilgrim United Church of Christ
- 82. Plan International USA
- 83. Planned Parenthood Federation of America
- 84. Population Connection Action Fund
- 85. Population Institute
- 86. Population Services International (PSI)
- 87. Positive Women's Network-USA
- 88. Religious Institute
- 89. Safe Horizon
- 90. Secular Coalition for America
- 91. SIECUS: Sex Ed for Social Change
- 92. Sierra Club
- 93. SisterLove, Inc.
- 94. Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine
- 95. Synergía Initiatives for Human Rights

- 96. The AIDS Institute
- 97. The Center for Sexual Pleasure and Health
- 98. The Coalition for Children Affected by AIDS
- 99. The Hunger Project
- 100. Treatment Action Group (TAG)
- 101. Union for Reform Judaism
- 102. Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation
- 103. United State of Women
- 104. URGE: Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equity
- 105. Verity
- 106. Voices for Progress
- 107. WaterAid
- 108. White Ribbon Alliance Global Secretariat
- 109. Win Without War
- 110. Women Graduates USA
- 111. Women of Reform Judaism
- 112. Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO)
- 113. Women's Refugee Commission
- 114. Woodhull Freedom Foundation
- 115. YWCA USA

CC: Speaker Nancy Pelosi Senator Jeanne Shaheen Representative Nita Lowey