



REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH LEADERS URGE CONGRESS TO STOP PLAYING GAMES WITH DC WOMEN'S HEALTH

Advocates emphasize that denial of abortion coverage for low-income women in DC is based on politics and ignores the needs of women.

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(Washington, DC) - Statement by Susannah Baruch, Interim President & CEO of the Reproductive Health Technologies Project as part of a press conference organized by Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes-Norton (DC) in response to Appropriations riders targeting the District of Columbia.

“We are proud to join Congresswoman Norton and our coalition partners in expressing our concern about the ongoing push to ban the District of Columbia from using its local Medicaid funds to provide health coverage for abortion.

For a woman to be able to make a real decision about what is best for her and her family, she needs to be able to afford care, but since the passage of the Hyde Amendment in 1976, Congress has withheld health coverage for abortion services for women who use Medicaid benefits. This policy creates obstacles to care for low-income women, many of whom are women of color, who already face significant barriers to receiving high-quality care.

While federal Medicaid excludes abortion coverage for most women, it provides the option for states to use their own Medicaid funds to offer abortion care, as well as childbirth-related care, for women struggling to make ends meet. Fifteen states provide health coverage for all pregnancy-related care and include abortion coverage.

Since 1988, some members of Congress have tried to play political games with women's health by denying the District of Columbia the same ability to provide abortion coverage. Politicians should not withhold coverage from someone who is in need and qualified for Medicaid just to make it impossible for her to have an abortion. These kinds of restrictions harm women's health and erect barriers to safe abortion care.

When Medicaid covers pregnancy care but denies coverage for abortion, politicians are taking away a woman's ability to make important, personal decisions based on what is best for her circumstances. Decisions about whether to choose adoption, end a pregnancy, or raise a child are better left to a woman and her family. However we feel about abortion, we shouldn't deny a woman in DC the health coverage she needs just because she's poor.”

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