



POLITICIANS SHOULD STOP PLAYING POLITICS WITH THE HEALTH OF WOMEN IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

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(Washington, DC) - Statement by Jessica Arons, President & CEO of the Reproductive Health Technologies Project, on today's House Appropriations Committee vote targeting Medicaid coverage for abortion for low-income women in the District of Columbia.

“We stand with Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes-Norton (D-DC) and the women of the District of Columbia in condemning the continued denial of local Medicaid funds to cover abortion care, and we thank Reps. Barbara Lee (D-CA) and Mike Quigley (D-IL) for offering an amendment to strip this discriminatory policy from the Financial Services and General Government Appropriations bill.

“Since the passage of the Hyde Amendment in 1976, Congress has withheld health coverage for abortion care for women who qualify for Medicaid, a joint federal-state insurance program, and who, by definition, cannot afford to pay out-of-pocket for their health care. This policy has a disproportionate impact on women of color, particularly in a place like the District of Columbia where women of color are overrepresented among Medicaid recipients. Indeed, the overwhelming majority (93 percent) of DC residents whose access to abortion care is restricted by the local-funds ban are people of color.

“Congress extended the Hyde policy to the District of Columbia in 1988, ignoring the right of its citizens to govern their own affairs by prohibiting the District from covering abortion care with local funds, as every state has the authority to do. Fifteen states currently provide health coverage for all pregnancy-related care, including abortion services.

“When Medicaid covers health care services for a woman who carries her pregnancy to term but withholds it from a woman who must end her pregnancy, it interferes with her ability to make important, personal decisions based on what is best for her circumstances. However we feel about abortion, politicians shouldn't be able to deny a woman in the District the health coverage she needs just because she's poor.”

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