January 18, 2017

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the over 170,000 bipartisan members and supporters of the American Association of University Women (AAUW), I write to express our grave and deep concerns regarding the nomination of Rep. Tom Price (R-GA) to serve as Secretary of Health and Human Services. Rep. Price’s record of working to erode access to affordable, quality health care underscores the importance to carefully and thoroughly explore whether he is truly qualified to serve and meet the needs of all Americans. AAUW looks forward to better understanding his positions on these critical issues through the Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions’ as well as the Finance Committee’s hearings, and is keenly interested in Rep. Price’s response to questions for the record. AAUW will determine our support of or opposition to Rep. Tom Price’s nomination following his confirmation hearing.

AAUW believes a full vetting of each Cabinet nominee must include close examination of threshold questions concerning qualifications and temperament. Each nominee should also be free from all current and potential conflicts of interest. Especially during this tumultuous time in our democracy, even the appearance of a nominee’s impropriety could undermine public confidence in a fair process and an ethical government. Personal or political allegiances do not in any way entitle individual nominees to less scrutiny. Indeed, senators should possess a healthy skepticism where nominees have significant personal or business relationships with the president-elect, and such nominees may require additional scrutiny to ensure public confidence in a full and fair confirmation process. Most critically, senators should not move forward any nominee – such as Price – whose background check and ethics screening remains incomplete.

Basic to all of AAUW’s public policy efforts is the understanding that true equity requires a balance between the rights of the individual and the needs of the community. AAUW opposes all forms of discrimination and supports constitutional protection for the civil rights of all individuals. AAUW promotes the economic, social, and physical well-being of all persons. Essential to that well-being is a system that supports quality affordable dependent care; paid family and medical leave; safe, livable, and affordable housing; quality affordable and accessible health care including reproductive health care; and a clean and healthful environment. We oppose any efforts to undermine Medicare and Medicaid, including privatization and block grant proposals.

Rep. Tom Price’s record on these public policy priorities leaves much unanswered and much to be desired.

- **Rep. Price is an outspoken advocate for repealing the Affordable Care Act (ACA).** As Chair of the House Budget Committee, Rep. Price has been a fierce critic of the Affordable Care Act and a leading author of legislation to repeal the 2010 health care law. This position is also reinforced through his voting record as he voted dozens of times to repeal the ACA.¹ His proposal would essentially repeal the law without a proper plan for replacement. Such a plan
would eliminate current coverage for millions of people, including middle and low-income families seeking relief from rising out-of-pocket expenses and who benefit from basic preventative services. Rep. Price’s plan to repeal the ACA would also wipe out anti-discrimination laws protecting women’s health care and undermine the nearly 9.5 million previously uninsured women who, as a result of the ACA, were able to gain access to affordable, comprehensive health care coverage.\(^2\) If his Congressional actions are any indication, Rep. Price would roll back important gains for women’s health if confirmed.

The Department of Health and Human Services is tasked with enhancing and protecting the health and well-being of all Americans, but Rep. Price’s actions continue to demonstrate efforts to promote the interests of the well-to-do and well-connected, at the expense of the vast majority of Americans. AAUW looks forward to a comprehensive assessment of Rep. Price’s position on these issues.

- **Rep. Price opposes access to family planning services.** Rep. Price’s voting record on reproductive health care is reason for concern. In the past, Rep. Price has co-sponsored legislation that would outlaw abortion, stem cell research, forms of contraception, and in-vitro fertilization.\(^3\)

In addition to opposing specific family planning and reproductive health services, Rep. Price has supported defunding Planned Parenthood health centers which provide high-quality, affordable sexual and reproductive health care for millions of women and men. Rep. Price has even gone so far as to assert that no woman has faced barriers accessing birth control.\(^4\) Yet research continues to reinforce that one in three women struggle with the cost of prescription birth control at some point in their lives.\(^5\) Rep. Price’s voting record and repeated calls for the defunding Planned Parenthood demonstrate his disregard for women’s health and for ensuring quality, affordable health care is available for all. AAUW looks forward to a comprehensive assessment of Rep. Price’s positions on these issues.

- **Rep. Price supports privatizing Medicare and cutting Medicaid.** During his tenure in Congress, Rep. Price has established a record of extremism that would directly affect older adults, the majority of whom are women and individuals with disabilities. Rep. Price is a proponent of proposals to cut billions from Medicare, converting the program to a voucher which would lose value over time and shift more costs onto seniors and people with disabilities.\(^6\)

Rep. Price has also targeted low-income women and families by seeking to cut funding for Medicaid and to eviscerate the program through the use of block grants and per capita caps.\(^7\) Millions of women rely on Medicaid for care throughout their lives – from reproductive and maternal health services to nursing home care. Block granting or capping Medicaid would undermine the critical role that Medicaid plays in supporting the health and well-being of millions of people in this country. AAUW looks forward to a comprehensive assessment of Rep. Price’s position of these issues.

Again, I write to express AAUW’s grave concerns about the nomination of Rep. Tom Price (R-GA) to be Secretary of Health and Human Services. Price’s record of working to erode access to affordable, quality health care necessitates that you carefully evaluate his commitment to serve all individuals, as
well as his qualifications to act as Secretary of Health and Human Services. Cosponsorship and votes associated with this nomination may be scored in the AAUW Action Fund *Congressional Voting Record* for the 115th Congress. Please do not hesitate to contact me at 202/785-7720, or Pam Yuen, government relations coordinator, if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Lisa M. Maatz
Vice President of Government Relations and Advocacy

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3 The Right to Life Act, H.R.552 (2 February 2005).


