

April 10, 2026

The Honorable Susan Collins  
Chair  
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations  
S-128, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Vice Chair  
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations  
S-146A, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Cole  
Chair  
U.S. House Committee on Appropriations  
H-307, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Ranking Member  
U.S. House Committee on Appropriations  
1036 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairs Collins and Cole, Vice Chair Murray, and Ranking Member DeLauro:

We, the undersigned 65+ organizations that support reproductive health, rights, and justice, write to urge you to eliminate the harmful Weldon Amendment from the Fiscal Year (FY) 2027 appropriations package. The Weldon Amendment is a budget rider in the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (Labor-HHS) appropriations bill that, for far too long, has emboldened providers to allow their personal beliefs, not patient health and the standard of care, to determine the care a patient receives.

Access to reproductive health care—including abortion—is vital to gender justice. The ability to decide whether and when to carry a pregnancy and become a parent is crucial to a person’s liberty, equality, and economic security. In the aftermath of the Supreme Court’s lawless decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization*, reports of delayed or denied care for pregnant people have become ubiquitous, and Congress must act urgently to protect the freedom of all people to control their bodies, lives, and futures.

### **The Weldon Amendment Prioritizes Personal Beliefs Over Patient Health**

Since FY 2005, the Weldon Amendment has been attached to the discriminatory Hyde Amendment—a rider that bans the use of certain federal funds to cover abortion, with only limited exceptions—in the annual Labor-HHS bill.<sup>1</sup> While the Weldon Amendment is deceptively written to prohibit “discrimination” against health care entities that refuse to provide, cover, pay for, or refer for abortion, it really emboldens health care providers—including hospitals and health insurance plans, as well as individual nurses and doctors—to discriminate against patients by refusing to provide the care they need.

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<sup>1</sup> Weldon Amendment, Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2005, Pub. L. 108–447, 118 Stat. 2809 (2005); <https://www.congress.gov/108/plaws/publ447/PLAW-108publ447.pdf>.

By giving a green light to refusals of abortion care, the Weldon Amendment puts patients' health and lives in danger, even in states where abortion is legal. A single instance of being refused care can mean a patient never getting the care they need—or receiving it only after enduring significant delays and harm.<sup>2</sup> There are no provisions in the Weldon Amendment to protect patient access to abortion services.

The Weldon Amendment is especially harmful because it has been weaponized to intimidate states that seek to protect abortion access by threatening critical federal health funding. For example, in December 2020—during the COVID-19 pandemic—the Trump Administration attempted to strip California of \$800 million in federal funding annually because of a state law that ensures residents have insurance coverage of abortion.<sup>3</sup> And recently, in January 2026, the Trump administration threatened to cut federal funding to Illinois over state law provisions that ensure patients are able to access the care they need by requiring providers to give referrals if they are unwilling to provide the care themselves because of personal beliefs or objections.<sup>4</sup> The Trump administration threatened Illinois with penalties even though these provisions are being challenged in court and not currently enforced. Once again, the administration is weaponizing the Weldon Amendment to undermine commonsense policies in pursuit of its anti-abortion agenda.

The first Trump administration issued rules that relied on the Weldon Amendment and other refusal of care laws to embolden virtually any entity involved in health care—from doctors to schedulers to nurses to ambulance drivers—to deny patients care and even information about care.<sup>5</sup> Fortunately, many harmful provisions of these policies were blocked and reversed,<sup>6</sup> but efforts to expand and weaponize the Weldon Amendment continue.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> REFUSALS TO PROVIDE HEALTH CARE THREATEN THE HEALTH AND LIVES OF PATIENTS NATIONWIDE, NWLC (2023), <https://nwlc.org/resource/refusals-to-provide-health-care-threaten-the-health-and-lives-of-patients-nationwide-2/> (last visited March 19, 2025).

<sup>3</sup> *HHS to Disallow \$200M in California Medicaid Funds Due to Unlawful Abortion Insurance Mandate; Refers Vermont Medical Center to DOJ for Lawsuit Over Conscience Violations*, U.S. DEP'T OF HEALTH & HUM. SERVS. (Dec. 16, 2020), <https://public3.pagefreezer.com/content/HHS.gov/31-12-2020T08:51/https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2020/12/16/hhs-disallow-200m-california-medicaid-funds-due-unlawful-abortion-insurance-mandate.html>. In January 2020, the Trump Administration issued a notice of violation to the state of California. *See HHS Issues Notice of Violation to California for its Abortion Coverage Mandate*, U.S. DEP'T OF HEALTH & HUM. SERVS. (Jan. 24, 2020), <https://public3.pagefreezer.com/content/HHS.gov/31-12-2020T08:51/https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2020/01/24/hhs-issues-notice-of-violation-to-california-for-its-abortion-coverage-mandate.html>. On August 13, 2021, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office for Civil Rights withdrew its 2020 determination that there had been a Weldon Amendment violation and closed the complaints at issue, finding that the complainants, Skyline Wesleyan Church and Missionary Guadalupanas, did not meet the definition of a "health care entity" under the Weldon Amendment. Letter from Robinsue Frohboese, Acting Director, Off. for C.R., to Rob Bonta, Att'y Gen., State of Cal. (Aug. 13, 2021), <https://www.hhs.gov/conscience/conscience-protections/ca-letter/index.html>.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *Protecting Conscience Rights in Health Care*, <https://www.hhs.gov/press-room/conscience-dlc.html> (January 21, 2026); Health Care Right of Conscience Act, 745 ILCS 70/1 et seq. (2021), <https://www.ilga.gov/Legislation/ILCS/Articles?ActID=2082&ChapterID=58>.

<sup>5</sup> The reach of these proposed rules could have meant a rape survivor could be denied emergency birth control, a transgender person could be denied gender-affirming care, or a pregnant person could be denied information and counseling on their pregnancy options. *See Ensuring That Department of Health and Human Services Funds Do Not Support Coercive or Discriminatory Policies or Practices in Violation of Federal Law*, 73 Fed. Reg. 78,071 (December 19, 2008) (codified at 45 C.F.R. § 88); *Protecting Statutory Conscience Rights in Health Care*; Delegations of Authority, 84 Fed. Reg. 23,170 (May 21, 2019) (codified at 45 C.F.R. § 88).

<sup>6</sup> Regulation for the Enforcement of Federal Health Care Provider Conscience Protection Laws, 76 Fed. Reg. 9,968 (February 23, 2011) (codified at 45 C.F.R. § 88); *New York v. U.S. Dep't of Health & Hum. Servs.*, 414 F. Supp. 3d 475 (S.D.N.Y. 2019); *Safeguarding the Rights of Conscience as Protected by Federal Statutes*, 88 Fed. Reg. 820 (January 5, 2023) (to be codified at 45 C.F.R. § 88).

<sup>7</sup> The FY 24 House-introduced Labor-HHS bill included language attempting to create a private right of action that would allow virtually anyone to bring a case in federal court for an "actual or threatened violation" of the Weldon Amendment. FY 2024 Appropriations Bill for U.S. Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, & Education, H.R. 5894 § 245A, 118<sup>th</sup> Cong.; <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/AP/AP07/20230714/116252/BILLS-118--AP--LaborHHS-FY24LHSSSubcommitteeMark.pdf>.

Eliminating the Weldon Amendment is not only critical as a matter of policy, it is also popular with voters. This was evident even before the *Dobbs* decision—a July 2021 poll in battleground congressional districts found that 6 in 10 voters oppose health care providers refusing treatment to a woman seeking an abortion on the basis of providers’ religious or moral beliefs.<sup>8</sup> In a June 2022 poll of likely 2022 voters, the majority opposed the idea that institutions, including insurance companies (66% of respondents), employers (63%), and hospitals (59%), should be able to refuse abortion care based on personal or religious beliefs. Nearly two-thirds recognized that refusal of care laws put patients’ health and lives in danger.<sup>9</sup>

The need to eliminate the harmful Weldon Amendment is critical in this moment, as states ban abortion and refusals of care worsen, with reports of patients being turned away for essential medical care and urgent medical interventions.<sup>10</sup> Fortunately, both the House and Senate in FY 2022 and 2023 made historic progress by removing the harmful Weldon and Hyde Amendments from their Labor-HHS bills. Congress must demonstrate its commitment to serve the will of the people by removing the Weldon Amendment permanently from its FY 2027 appropriations bills.

Sincerely,

Abortion Forward  
Abortion Liberation Fund in Pennsylvania  
ACCESS REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE  
Advocates for Trans Equality  
Advocates for Youth  
All\* Above All  
American Association of University Women (AAUW)  
American Atheists  
American Humanist Association  
American Society for Reproductive Medicine  
Americans United for Separation of Church and State  
Arkansas Black Gay Men's Forum  
Autistic Self Advocacy Network  
Autistic Women & Nonbinary Network  
California LGBTQ Health and Human Services Network

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<sup>8</sup> Hart Research Associates & Vision Strategy and Insights, Polling of 801 registered voters in battleground congressional districts from July 7-12, 2021, on file with the National Women’s Law Center.

<sup>9</sup> GQR, Mixed mode survey among one thousand registered voters nationally from June 22-30, 2022 including Black, Latino, and AAPI over samples of 100 respondents each, on file with the National Women’s Law Center.

<sup>10</sup> Refusals to provide abortion care are increasing following *Dobbs*, and although they are not always due to personal or religious beliefs, recent instances demonstrate the serious harm that can result from a refusal of care. For example, Mylissa Farmer was a Missouri resident who was denied emergency abortion care by multiple hospitals in Kansas, Missouri, and Illinois after her water broke at 18 weeks of pregnancy. Despite the severe threats to Ms. Farmer’s health and life and the fact that the pregnancy was not viable, the hospitals refused to provide the emergency care she needed. Ms. Farmer was forced to seek care elsewhere, and although she did receive the care she needed from an abortion clinic, Ms. Farmer suffered immense physical, mental, emotional, and financial harm. See Administrative Complaint, *Mylissa Farmer v. Freedman Health* (Nov. 8, 2022); <https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/2022.11.08-Mylissa-Farmer-EMTALA-complaint.pdf>.

Center for Biological Diversity  
Center for Reproductive Rights  
Central Florida Birth Network  
Clearinghouse on Women's Issues  
Doctors for America  
Equal Rights Advocates  
Equality California  
Equality Florida  
Feminist Majority  
FL National Organization for Women  
Guttmacher Institute  
Human Rights Campaign  
Ibis Reproductive Health  
In Our Own Voice: National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda  
Indivisible  
Institute for Women's Policy Research  
Interfaith Alliance  
Japanese American Citizens League  
Lawyers for Good Government  
League of Women Voters of the United States  
MomsRising  
NAACP  
National Abortion Federation  
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum  
National Association of Social Workers  
National Council of Jewish Women  
National Family Planning & Reproductive Health Association  
National Health Law Program (NHeLP)  
National Institute for Reproductive Health  
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Justice  
National Network of Abortion Funds  
National Organization For Women  
National Partnership for Women & Families  
National Women's Law Center  
National Women's Political Caucus  
People Power United  
Physicians for Reproductive Health  
Planned Parenthood Federation of America  
Poder Latinx  
Population Connection Action Fund

Positive Women's Network-USA  
Power to Decide  
Protect Our Care  
Reproductive Freedom For All  
SEIU  
Silver State Equality  
Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine  
The TransLatin@ Coalition  
UCSF Bixby Center for Global Reproductive Health  
UltraViolet Action  
Union for Reform Judaism  
URGE: Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equity  
Virginia Women's Foundation  
Women of Reform Judaism