

The Honorable Chuck Schumer

Majority Leader
United States Senate Room S-221, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi

Speaker of the House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Majority Leader Schumer,

We are ## human rights, feminist and women's organizations and ## advocates from around the world urging you to prioritize the permanent end, through any legislative means available, to the Mexico City Policy also known as the Global Gag Rule (GGR).

We are pleased that President Biden, like other Democrat Presidents before him, has rescinded the Global Gag Rule, but this is only a short-term solution to the egregious harms that this cruel policy inflicts on women and girls in marginalized communities around the world.

The policy affects the lives of people in low-income countries that receive U.S. global health assistance. It creates disruptions to national health systems, contrains access to health services, and the structural damage has resulted in more unintended pregnancies, and increased rates of STIs, HIV, and unsafe abortions. Despite false Republican claims that the GGR prevents abortion, abortion rates rose by 40% and use of modern contraception fell by 13.5% in countries highly impacted by the policy.¹

Further, by prohibiting foreign non-governmental organizations receiving U.S. development assistance from using their own funds to engage in any pro-abortion activities such as counseling on abortion as an option or campaigning for liberalized abortion laws, the GGR turns U.S. global health funding into an anti-democratic instrument that hampers civil society participation and undermines U.S. commitments to the promotion of free speech and democratic institutions.²

Whenever the GGR is enacted, the U.S. global health programs are contravening international human rights norms. The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights enshrines the right to life and the right to health, and the many international treaties and other legal instruments that have followed support women's right to health care, including access to safe abortion. In 2015, the world adopted the Sustainable Development Goals, including gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls that includes a target to achieve universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).³ The GGR violates the U.S. government's commitment to upholding SRHR by denying women the full range of reproductive health options and significantly impairing their control over their reproductive lives.

¹ [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X\(19\)30267-0/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X(19)30267-0/fulltext)

² <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R44858.pdf> page 1

³ <https://srhrforall.org/download/prescribing-chaos-in-global-health-the-global-gag-rule-from-1984-2018/?wpdmdl=1064&refresh=60708c7d06aa41617988733> page 9

A permanent end to the Global Gag Rule would bolster the longstanding aspirational commitments of the U.S. to global health, democracy and human rights promotion, and would be a significant step towards reestablishing the U.S. as a leader in global health, upholding human rights standards.

We urge you to take legislative action to permanently end the Global Gag Rule. We look forward to your leadership in ensuring that this disastrous and deadly policy is never again exported to other nations to restrict the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women and girls.

Signed,