



November 17, 2009

Honorable Harry Reid
United States Senate
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

Dear Senate Majority Leader Reid:

On behalf the members, partners and supporters of the coalition known as **Raising Women's Voices for the Health Care We Need**, we write to urge you to ensure that health care reform does not impose new restrictions on women's ability to obtain and afford comprehensive reproductive health care, including abortion care.

Women are among the strongest supporters of health reform. Our coalition applauds your efforts to achieve national health care reform this year. Since January, our national coordinators, advisory board and regional coordinators around the country have sponsored or participated in dozens of rallies, press conferences, teach-ins and other events promoting the need for health reform.

Those who proposed and supported the Stupak-Pitts amendment that was added to the House health reform bill have insisted that there will be no health reform without a sweeping new ban on abortion coverage. Already under the Hyde Amendment, millions of women don't have access to all of the health services they need, a situation we deplore. The Stupak-Pitts Amendment goes far beyond the current restrictions, as well as the compromise that was adopted in the Senate Finance Committee.

If the Stupak-Pitts amendment became law, millions of women would be prevented from purchasing insurance coverage that includes abortion services through the exchanges that health reform establishes, if they receive even small public subsidies. Moreover, an analysis by health insurance experts at the George Washington University School of Public Health and Health Services concluded that access to abortion care for women who don't receive subsidies is also very likely to be restricted. This is because "the cumulative effect of the provision, in combination with existing federal laws governing Medicaid and federal employee health benefits (as well as the law of certain states) inevitably can be expected to move the entire health benefits industry away from its current inclusive coverage norms and toward a new norm of exclusion."

Representative Stupak and his supporters have tried to divide those who support health reform, by insisting we choose between historic legislation to expand health care coverage for many of the millions of uninsured and a dangerous amendment that would deal a sharp blow to women's health care. We need not face such a terrible choice.

Today, we call on you to ensure that language similar to the Stupak-Pitts Amendment does not become part of the Senate health care reform bill. We ask you to use the powers of your office to ensure that women's health is treated fairly in health care reform. Women around the country will thank you!

Sincerely,

Raising Women's Voices for the Health Care We Need and our partners:

ACCESS/Women's Health Rights Coalition
Oakland, CA

Avery Institute for Social Change
Boston, MA

California Latinas for Reproductive Justice
Los Angeles, CA

Cedar River Clinics
Tacoma, Renton, Yakima, WA

Center for Independence of the Disabled
New York, NY

Institute of Women and Ethnic Studies
New Orleans, LA

National Black Women's Health Project
Baltimore, MD

National Health Law Program (NHeLP)
Washington, DC

National Institute for Reproductive Health
New York, NY

National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health
New York, NY

National Network of Abortion Funds
Boston, MA

National Women's Health Network
Washington, DC

Maryland Women's Coalition for Health Care Reform
Potomac, MD

MergerWatch Project of Community Catalyst
New York, NY

NARAL Pro-Choice New York

New York, NY

NARAL Pro-Choice Oregon
Portland, OR

New Jersey Citizen Action
Newark, NJ

NM Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice
Albuquerque, NM

New Voices Pittsburgh: Women of Color for Reproductive Justice
Pittsburgh, PA

Our Bodies Ourselves
Cambridge, MA

Planned Parenthood of Southern New England
New Haven, CT

Reproductive Health Access Project
New York, NY

Wisconsin Alliance for Women's Health
Madison, WI

Women's Way
Philadelphia, PA