

The Honorable Richard Blumenthal
724 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
717 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Judy Chu
1520 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Marcia Fudge
2344 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Lois Frankel
1037 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

November 14, 2013

Dear Senators Blumenthal and Baldwin, and Representatives Chu, Fudge, and Frankel:

With 203 abortion restrictions passing in the states over the past 3 yearsⁱ, we agree that we must remove the onerous restrictions that have been placed on abortion providers and that obstruct women's health. Because of our commitment to reproductive health access, we applaud the Women's Health Protection Act (WHPA) of 2013 and support the removal of the many unnecessary and harmful restrictions that for too many put safe and timely abortion care out of reach. We are very disappointed, however, that WHPA excludes parental consent and notification laws which exist in 39 statesⁱⁱ and leave many young women afraid and alone.

Young people are at the forefront of the reproductive rights, health, and justice movements. We need to stand with them against the harmful parental involvement restrictions that can put their health and well being at risk. It is imperative that the WHPA not intentionally exclude restrictions placed on young women's ability to obtain abortion services. In addition, the exclusion of parental involvement laws, disproportionately impacts young people of color, who are more likely to experience unintended pregnancy as minors and are disproportionately living in states where parental involvement laws are in effectⁱⁱⁱ.

Parental involvement laws, including parental consent and parental notification laws, single out young people's access to abortion care. In many states, minors may independently consent to a range of sensitive health care services, including access to contraceptives, prenatal care, and STI care.^{iv} This trend is based on the fact that young people are less likely to seek these sensitive services if they require parental involvement, especially when conditions at home are unsafe.^v The American Medical Association, the Society for Adolescent Medicine, APHA, the American College of Obstetricians and

Gynecologists, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and other health professional organizations stand in agreement against mandatory parental involvement in abortion decision making.^{vi} Still, young women's access to abortion care requires parental consent or notification in a majority of states.

Ideally, any woman, including a young woman, who is faced with an unintended pregnancy can seek the advice of those who care for her. Studies show that most young women will seek support from a parent or family member when they find themselves with an unintended pregnancy. But for those who can't, those afraid to anger or disappoint, or who face the threat of violence in their homes— we believe it would be best for them to seek the advice of a trained medical professional than to face the situation alone and afraid.

The fact is that the majority of young people seeking abortions do consult a parent, no matter what state they live in.^{vii} But those who are unable to involve their parents have good reasons. Fifty percent of pregnant teens have experienced violence^{viii}; thirty percent of teens who don't tell their parents about their abortions fear the threat of violence or being forced to leave home.^{ix} We all hope daughters and sons can turn to their parents when they make important decisions. But we cannot and should not legislate parent-child communication.

Recently, the unfortunate circumstances of a 16-year old young woman in Nebraska illustrate all too well the harmful impact of parental notification laws. Instead of her abortion being a private medical decision this young woman could make in consultation with her health care provider and those who support her, it was left in the hands of a judge who decided that at the age of sixteen, the young woman wasn't "mature" enough to decide for herself and denied her the abortion. ^x This judge decided to play politics with a young woman's life to advance his own extreme ideological agenda.

We hope that moving forward with this bill, and any other bill seeking to protect women's access to abortion, that you include younger women and protect their access to safe, legal, and affordable abortion care.

Sincerely,

Advocates for Youth
California Latinas for Reproductive Justice
Choice USA
Colorado Organization for Latina Opportunity & Reproductive Rights
Forward Together
Hadassah, The Women's Zionist Organization of America, Inc.
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health
National Network of Abortion Funds
Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice
Young Women United

ⁱ Guttmacher Institute. "State Legislation in 2011/2012/2013 Related to Reproductive Health." Accessed from <http://www.guttmacher.org/statecenter/updates/2011newlaws.pdf>, <http://www.guttmacher.org/statecenter/updates/2012newlaws.pdf>, <http://www.guttmacher.org/statecenter/updates/2013Newlaws.pdf> on November 8, 2013.

ⁱⁱ Guttmacher Institute. "State Policies in Brief: Parental Involvement in Minors' Abortions." Accessed from http://www.guttmacher.org/statecenter/spibs/spib_PIMA.pdf on November 8, 2013.

ⁱⁱⁱ Guttmacher Institute. "Confidential Reproductive Health Services for Minors: The Potential Impact of Mandated Parental Involvement in Contraception." Accessed from <http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/journals/3618204.pdf> November 12, 2013

^{iv} Guttmacher Institute. "State Policies in Brief: Minors' Access to Contraceptive Services." Accessed from http://www.guttmacher.org/statecenter/spibs/spib_MACS.pdf on November 8, 2013.

^v Dailard C and Richardson CT. "Teenagers' Access to Confidential Reproductive Health Care Services." *The Guttmacher Report on Public Policy*, 2005: 8(4).

^{vi} American Medical Association. "Opinion 5.055 – Confidential Care for Minors." Accessed from <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/physician-resources/medical-ethics/code-medical-ethics/opinion5055.page> on November 8, 2013. American Public Health Association. "Ensuring Minors' Access to Confidential Abortion Services." Accessed from <http://www.apha.org/advocacy/policy/policysearch/default.htm?id=1415> on November 8, 2013. American Academy of Pediatrics. "Achieving Quality Health Services for Adolescents." Accessed from <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/121/6/1263.full?sid=7322b383-0e96-4d24-a3ba-2914a99307bb> on November 8, 2013. Center for Adolescent Medicine. *Policy Compendium on Confidential Health Care Services for Adolescents, 2nd Edition*. Accessed from <http://www.cahl.org/PDFs/PolicyCompendium/PolicyCompendium.pdf> on November 8, 2013.

^{vii} Dennis A et al., *The Impact of Laws Requiring Parental Involvement for Abortion: A Literature Review*, New York: Guttmacher Institute, 2009

^{viii} American Psychological Association, *Parental Consent Laws for Adolescent Reproductive Health Care: What Does the Psychological Research Say?* (Feb. 2000), citing A.B. Berenson, et al., *Prevalence of Physical and Sexual Assault in Pregnant Adolescents*, 13 *J. of Adolescent Health* 466-69 (1992).

^{ix} Martin Donohoe, *Parental Notification and Consent Laws for Teen Abortions: Overview and 2006 Ballot Measures MEDSCAPE Ob/Gyn & Women's Health*, February 9, 2007

^x Nebraska Supreme Court. *In Re Petition of Anonymous 5, a Minor*. Accessed from <http://supremecourt.ne.gov/sites/supremecourt.ne.gov/files/sc/opinions/s13-510009.pdf> on November 8, 2013.