

Abortion is Health Care Everywhere: Expanding abortion access globally

The Abortion is Health Care Everywhere Act would repeal the Helms Amendment, which bars U.S. foreign assistance funding for abortion. Repealing Helms would save the lives of millions of people around the world.

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WASHINGTON, DC – Senator Cory Booker (D-NJ) and Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) today reintroduced the [Abortion is Health Care Everywhere Act](#). This is the first-ever legislation to repeal the Helms Amendment, a 50-year-old policy that bans the use of United States foreign assistance for abortion, putting an arbitrary line between abortion care and all other global health services. Senators Richard Blumenthal, Tammy Duckwoth, Mazie Hirono, and Tina Smith also lead this critical legislation, which has 21 original cosponsors in the Senate. Representatives Barbara Lee, Ayanna Pressley, Diana DeGette, Norma Torres and Marilyn Strickland colead the Abortion is Health Care Everywhere Act in the House where it enjoys the support of XXX original cosponsors.

"For nearly 50 years, the racist, harmful Helms Amendment has barred U.S. foreign assistance from being used to offer abortion care, even in countries where abortions are legal. The United States should not stand in the way of health care and bodily autonomy in other countries. Developing countries bear the burden of 97% of all unsafe abortions. We must protect women's health around the globe. By singling out abortion as a restricted health service, the Helms Amendment reinforces efforts to criminalize abortion and heightens abortion-related stigma," **said Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky**. "I am proud to reintroduce the bicameral Abortion is Health Care Everywhere Act with Senator Booker and Representatives Lee, Pressley, DeGette, Strickland and Torres. Comprehensive reproductive health care, including safe, legal, and accessible abortion, is a human right."

Enacted in 1973, the Helms Amendment is found in the Foreign Assistance Act and has been passed as part of Congressional appropriations bills every year for nearly five decades. It is an antiquated, neo-colonialist policy that has, for nearly 50 years, curbed global reproductive and economic freedom around the world. The policy prohibits U.S. foreign aid from being used for 'the performance of abortion as a method of family planning.' But in practice, Helms has banned all U.S. foreign assistance funds from being used for **any** abortion care. This policy exacerbates existing health disparities; and denies millions of mostly Black and brown people in low-to-middle income countries the care they need and want. And the harms of the Helms Amendment have only been made worse following the devastating Dobbs decision which has and will continue to reverberate globally, affecting the lives and ability to access abortion care for millions of people living thousands of miles away.

This decision has emboldened anti-rights actors around the world and increased abortion stigma in dozens of countries. Many countries who have long used the Roe decision to bolster liberalizing their abortion laws now face challenges.

“For decades, many countries around the world relied on *Roe v. Wade* to expand access to abortion care in their own countries,” said **Senator Booker**. “In the wake of the disastrous decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson*, people across the globe have found their access to essential health services restricted. To ensure that all people have access to critical reproductive services, we must repeal the Helms Amendment and ensure that US foreign aid can be used for safe, legal abortion care overseas.”

The *Abortion is Health Care Everywhere Act* is an opportunity for the U.S. to fulfil its commitment to protecting and promoting the reproductive health and rights of people living overseas and to address the undeniable harm that the Dobbs decision has caused around the world. . Reintroducing the *Abortion is Health Care Everywhere Act* is an opportunity for Congress to address negative global impacts of the *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health* decision, by protecting and promoting the reproductive health and rights of people living overseas.

A broad coalition of global reproductive health, rights and justice advocacy, research, and service-delivery organizations celebrates this critical reintroduction today. This group has been working to mitigate and address the harms caused by the Helms Amendment for over a decade. Additionally, the Abortion is Health Care Everywhere Act is endorsed by more than 180 organizations and quotes from several groups can be found below for inclusion in media coverage.

More information can be found at repealhelms.org.

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Quotes from endorsing organizations

Name and Organization	Quote
<p>Dr. Anu Kumar President and CEO, Ipas</p>	<p>It is time for the United States to join the global community supporting reproductive justice, instead of undermining human rights with harmful policies that deny millions of people access to essential health-care services they want and need.</p> <p>For far too long, the U.S. has imposed neo-colonialist, racist values through foreign policies like the Helms Amendment that affect millions of people thousands of miles away.</p> <p>Every year, 35 million people have unsafe abortions, and millions suffer injuries and long-term disabilities as a result. And it is Black and brown women who live in resource-poor countries who bear the burden of the deeply unjust Helms Amendment.</p> <p>As it stands, the U.S. government is the only donor nation that neglects, stigmatizes and separates abortion care in its foreign assistance. Repealing the Helms Amendment would lift 50 years of repression and expand access to lifesaving abortion care for people around the world. This policy does nothing other than stigmatize a health procedure and the people who need it.</p>
<p>Nabeeha Kazi Hutchins, President and CEO, PAI</p>	<p>“Globally, at least 35 million women have abortions in unsafe conditions every year. Unsafe abortion is a leading cause of maternal mortality and morbidity in low- and middle-income countries where there are significant barriers to accessing quality abortion care.</p> <p>“Restrictive U.S. foreign policies like the Helms amendment create an added burden and undermine country-led efforts to meet the needs of their own communities, reduce maternal mortality and bolster reproductive rights. As the largest donor of global health assistance, the U.S. government is compounding health inequities and amplifying a policy that harms people and their communities.</p> <p>“The Abortion is Health Care Everywhere Act, which permanently repeals the Helms amendment, would result in at least 19 million fewer unsafe abortions annually, leading to 17,000 fewer maternal deaths and 12 million fewer women needing medical treatment for complications from unsafe procedures. We welcome its introduction in the House and</p>

	Senate and urge its swift passage through Congress so that U.S. policy is guided by science, embraces human rights and the autonomy and agency of all people and aligns with global public health institutions that recognize abortion as essential health care.”
NARAL Pro-Choice America President Mini Timmaraju	“We know that the fight for reproductive freedom extends beyond the borders of the United States. That’s why it’s so important to repeal the anti-choice Helms Amendment, which denies millions of people around the world the reproductive health care they need, including abortion. The Abortion Is Health Care Everywhere Act will help ensure that people everywhere are free to make their own decisions about their lives, bodies, and futures, and we’re grateful to Senator Booker and Representative Schakowsky for leading on this important issue.”
Mrs. Nana Phirosmanashvili Executive Director of the Association for Farmers Rights Defense, AFRD	A Georgia-based program implemented by the Association for Farmers Rights Defense, AFRD Georgia provides Education and Training Programs about healthcare services to Rural women and young mothers. The program covers education, first aid services, home care and child immunizations.
Lois Quam CEO, Pathfinder	“Safe abortion is critical health care – in the US and everywhere. The Helms Amendment restrictions mean that women around the world suffer unsafe abortions losing their health, lives, and rights. We are better than this and the United States should act to ensure human rights and access to these vital health care services. The Abortion is Health Care Everywhere Act is an opportunity to do that.”
Tara Romano Executive Director Pro-Choice North Carolina	The Helms Amendment remains a cynical attempt by anti-abortion U.S politicians to garner votes at the expense of the health and lives of women, especially women of color and Indigenous women, around the world. Organizations and advocates on the ground know what is needed for everyone in their communities to thrive, and receiving critical and lifesaving U.S aid should not be conditioned on accepting an anti-abortion ideology that is rooted in political ideology, rather than medical science, health care, and gender equity. Sen Jesse Helms’ policy positions were often detrimental to marginalized communities in North Carolina and around the world, and the amendment that bears his name must be repealed.
North American Society for Pediatric and	Adolescents and young adults both in the US and abroad deserve access to health systems that acknowledge their

Adolescent Gynecology	reproductive rights. For 47 years, the Helms Amendment has stood in the way of ensuring support globally for adolescents and young adults to receive confidential and comprehensive sexual and reproductive care, infringing on this human right on an international scale. The North American Society for Pediatric and Adolescent Gynecology applauds and endorses the Abortion is Health Care Everywhere Act in its aim to repeal Helms and remove this barrier to essential health care for our patients worldwide.
Pamela Merritt Executive Director, Medical Students for Choice	Medical Students for Choice advocates for abortion training and education because access to safe abortion is a fundamental human right and a necessary component of comprehensive healthcare. The Abortion is Health Care Everywhere Act is a crucial step towards ensuring that all individuals have access to the care they need, regardless of where they live or their economic status.
Jody Rabhan, Chief Policy Officer, National Council of Jewish Women	The Helms Amendment has been limiting the United States' ability to provide funds for contraception and abortion since 1973 by prohibiting foreign assistance from supporting safe abortion services around the world — including in countries where abortion is legal. The Abortion is Health Care Everywhere Act (AHCE) is the first bill ever to fully repeal the Helms Amendment and replace it with proactive language stating that US funding shall be used to provide comprehensive reproductive health care services and information, including abortion services, training, and equipment. National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW) has consistently called for the repeal of the Helms Amendment, and thanks its partners in Congress for introducing this landmark bill, which would bolster health care and human rights for people around the world.
Christian F. Nunes, President, NOW	The devastating effects of the Dobbs decision has not only been relegated to the United States but can be seen worldwide. Prior to the overturning of Roe v. Wade, countries around the world had been adhering to a broader liberalization of abortion policies which had led to the removal of barriers to access to abortion. Not only has the Dobbs decision emboldened anti-abortion groups in different nations but it has also established the United States as an outlier, intent on restricting the rights and liberties of women. NOW is proud to continue to support the <i>Abortion is Health Care Everywhere Act</i> which aims to repeal the Helms Amendment, a 47 year old policy rooted in both racism and colonialism and bars U.S. foreign assistance funding for abortion. Abortion care <i>is</i> health care and it is time the United States stopped being an outlier and joined the overdue but necessary trend toward global progress on abortion rights and access.
Kelley Dennings, campaigner, Center for Biological Diversity	Every person should have the right to make their own healthcare decisions. The ability for people to decide if and when to have children should never be limited by income, race

	<p>or geography. Universal access to reproductive health services — including abortion — is a basic human right. The Helms Amendment prevents people from getting the healthcare they want, need and deserve and has no place in U.S. foreign policy.</p>
<p>Julia Bunting, President, The Population Council</p>	<p>Evidence shows that restricting access to abortion does not reduce the number of abortions. Rather, it increases unsafe abortions and pregnancy-related deaths, and leads to detrimental financial, health, and family outcomes across generations. As a global research organization committed to sexual and reproductive health, rights, and choices, the Population Council recognizes abortion as an important component of comprehensive sexual and reproductive health care that is key to ensuring people’s autonomy, agency, and aspirations. We are proud to join partners around the world to champion equity, justice, and human rights by supporting the Abortion is Health Care Everywhere Act (AHCE).</p>
<p>Nicole Carr, Interim Executive Director, American Humanist Association</p>	<p>Humanists know that everyone, everywhere – especially those that are socio-economically disadvantaged – should be able to obtain a safe abortion and have the resources they need to access comprehensive reproductive health care. It’s past time to expel the Helms amendment from our foreign policy.</p>
<p>Erin Matson, co-founder and executive director, Reproaction</p>	<p>It is imperative that Congress pass the Abortion is Health Care Everywhere Act and repeal the Helms Amendment in order to expand access to abortion and improve health outcomes everywhere. A cruel neocolonial policy that allows the United States to make abortion care inaccessible for millions worldwide, the Helms Amendment has been a barrier to essential reproductive care for over four decades. In the wake of the Dobbs decision, it is more important now than ever that the United States does everything in its power to eliminate tools of reproductive control.</p>
<p>Tammy Tibbetts, co-founder and CEO, She’s the First</p>	<p>Every girl has the right to choose her own future. Restrictions on abortion care impact girls’ health and agency at this moment, but these regulations also drastically narrow girls’ ability to choose their path as they grow into adulthood. Abortion restrictions diminish everyone’s freedom. She’s the First supports the Abortion is Health Care Everywhere Act because all pregnant people should be able to access the care they need. This legislation would repeal the Helms Amendment, allowing U.S. foreign aid to fund life-saving health care. We support everyone’s right to bodily autonomy, critical healthcare, and privacy. To create a world where girls are respected, we must establish policies that protect their rights.</p>
<p>Rabbi Marla Feldman, Executive Director, Women of Reform Judaism</p>	<p>The medieval Jewish philosopher Maimonides proclaimed that providing medical care is a fundamental religious duty, and that withholding medical care from one in need is a desecration of God’s name. We are committed to advocating for a world where all are able to access the vital reproductive health care they</p>

	<p>need without government interference. The Helms Amendment violates this core value by limiting abortion access for the most vulnerable and perpetuating inequality in global health care. We are proud to endorse the Abortion is Health Care Everywhere Act, which would repeal the Helms Amendment and expand access to comprehensive reproductive health care worldwide.</p>
<p>Rev. Katey Zeh, Executive Director, Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice</p>	<p>No matter where one lives, access to comprehensive reproductive health care and family planning measures—including abortion—is one of the most powerful determining factors in level of education received, economic security, health, and overall quality of life. For nearly five decades, the Helms Amendment has worked to block people around the globe—particularly those who are young, poor, Black, or Brown—from receiving this essential care.</p> <p>We see this as an ongoing example of U.S. white patriarchal Christian imperialism and a direct attack on religious liberty and individual rights, health, and dignity. People across faith traditions all over the world seek abortion care, and we each possess the sacred human right to exercise our own moral conscience in making decisions about our bodies. The Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice is honored to be part of the efforts to support the <i>Abortion is Health Care Everywhere Act</i> and bring an end to the unjust Helms Amendment.</p>
<p>Jean Bruggeman, Executive Director, Freedom Network USA</p>	<p>For survivors of human trafficking, agency and autonomy are essential to healing. The Helms Amendment prevents survivors around the world from making their own informed healthcare choices. Restricting access to abortion does not protect trafficking survivors. Instead, it replicates the power and control dynamics of traffickers. It can even increase vulnerabilities to all forms of human trafficking. The Abortion is Healthcare Everywhere Act will ensure global health programs can provide necessary reproductive healthcare to survivors, support their mental and psychological healing and empowerment, and improve their health and wellbeing.</p>
<p>Obstetricians for Reproductive Justice</p>	<p>Abortion is healthcare. As an organization that works to uplift the most marginalized, we call for an end to bans that disproportionately affect those who already struggle to access safe, respectful, trauma-informed care as the result of racism and exclusion. The Abortion is Health Care Everywhere Act is needed so we can center bodily autonomy and put healthcare decisions back where they belong: in the hands of pregnant people - no matter where they live.</p>
<p>Mia Kim Sullivan, Executive Director, Collective Power for Reproductive Justice</p>	<p>Access to reproductive justice is a human right which should never depend on where you live. But unfortunately, the Far Right's ambitions to erode individual dignity and autonomy have never been limited to just the US, and one of the most harmful vehicles of this cultural imperialism has been the Helms Amendment. We remain steadfast in our calls to repeal the</p>

	<p>Helms Amendment, so that every person, everywhere, can access the human right to own our bodies, choices, and futures, no matter where in the world we live.</p>
<p>Beth Gendler, Executive Director, Jewish Community Action</p>	<p>The right to abortion is sacrosanct in Judaism. When you talk to rabbis and scholars from across the spectrum of observance, you will hear that abortion care should be protected. It is not a political decision, it's not a religious decision, it's a personal decision; and it has to do with our notion of when life begins. In this country, that discourse is rooted in the Christian understanding of when life begins, which is antithetical to our constitutional right to religious freedom.</p>
<p>Sonja Spoo, Director, Government Affairs and Advocacy, UltraViolet</p>	<p><i>“Bodily autonomy and access to reproductive healthcare is the foundation of a better future for all people. The fight for reproductive freedom is a global fight that we must continue both at home and in solidarity with people around the world as they work to advance reproductive freedom. Critically, that means doing our part to ensure reproductive oppression is not a rote part of our global policy and aid. As we continue to fight back against the loss of constitutional protections for abortion in the United States, we cannot forget the broader fight for reproductive health, rights, and justice. We must continue to advocate to dismantle the policies implemented that deny the world’s most vulnerable communities the right to abortion and other critical forms of reproductive healthcare. We urge Congress to work to pass the Abortion is Health Care Everywhere Act as part of the overall work to expand access to abortion around the world and in the U.S.”</i></p>
<p>Nancy J. Newman, Founder and President, International Action Network for Gender Equity & Law (IANGEL)</p>	<p>Safe and legal access to reproductive health care is necessary for achieving gender equality. The right to privacy in health care decision making, and the freedom to decide whether and when to carry a pregnancy to term, are human rights. IANGEL proudly endorses the Abortion is Health Care Everywhere Act, and urges its passage.</p>

<p>Herminia Palacio President and CEO, Guttmacher Institute</p>	<p>Congress should demonstrate with actions the US government’s commitment to global healthcare equity and women’s rights by repealing the harmful Helms amendment and passing the Abortion Is Health Care Everywhere Act. The Helms amendment is a deeply unjust and discriminatory policy that prohibits health care organizations abroad from using US global health assistance funds to support safe abortion services. Like other abortion restrictions, this funding ban most harshly impacts people with the fewest resources, including those who have low incomes, are young, or live in rural areas. The evidence is clear and irrefutable: Abortion is an experience shared by millions of people worldwide, both in places where abortion is highly restricted and where it is broadly legal. We urge Congress to recognize the basic human right of all people to decide freely whether and when to be pregnant, and whether and when to have children, and how many children to have.</p>
<p>Hannah Cavendish-Palmer, Interim Executive Director, Reproductive Health Access Project</p>	<p>As an organization that focuses on the expansion of access to critical reproductive and sexual health care services nationwide, the Reproductive Health Access Project (RHAP) is proud to endorse the Abortion is Health Care Everywhere Act (AHCE). The Helms Amendment is an outdated, restrictive, and harmful piece of legislation that stands in the way of comprehensive health care for individuals globally. Every person has the right to reproductive care, including abortion.</p> <p>Now more than ever, we need to protect and expand access to these services for the health and wellbeing of our communities and communities around the world. We are urging Congress to take a critical step in protecting and expanding reproductive freedom by passing the AHCE.</p>
<p>Akila Radhakrishnan, President, Global Justice Center</p>	<p>The Helms Amendment is a human rights catastrophe the US government has allowed to fester for half a century. Imposed as a complete ban on abortion US funding abroad, Helms blocks essential abortion care for people who need it most, from victims of wartime rape to individuals targeted in genocidal campaigns. It’s a grotesque human rights violation that defies the recommendations of leading international human rights and healthcare bodies. It’s past time for the US to repeal it, and every day it remains in place, the US is in violation of its legal and moral obligation to respect the human rights of pregnant people around the world.</p>
<p>Gloria L. Blackwell, Chief Executive Officer, American</p>	<p>AAUW believes that people have the right to make their own reproductive decisions and the right to access quality health</p>

Association of University Women (AAUW)	<p>care and family planning services without government interference.</p> <p>Data shows that access to family planning, factual sex health education, and a full range of reproductive health services improves women’s health care and economic security, and increases their wages and the likelihood of educational attainment.</p> <p>The freedom to control one’s reproductive decisions is a fundamental human right. Therefore, AAUW joins our coalition partners in calling on Congress to vote in favor of the Abortion is Health Care Everywhere Act.</p>
Nancy Northup, President and CEO of the Center for Reproductive Rights	<p>Denying people access to safe and timely abortion care has a profound impact on their health and lives. Policies like the Helms Amendment create unnecessary barriers to care and contradict international human rights law and the World Health Organization’s guidelines on abortion care. Congress must pass the Abortion is Health Care Everywhere Act and make funding available so that people around the world can access abortion care when and where they need it.</p>