

Twenty-two National Religious Groups Oppose Ban on Abortion Care Based on Arbitrary Gestational Limits

November 5, 2013

United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

We, the undersigned national religious groups, urge you to oppose any version of a ban on abortion care based on arbitrary gestational limits. We stand united across our faith traditions in opposing this extreme legislation, which would block a woman's access to safe healthcare options and deny her the ability to make decisions according to her own beliefs and conscience. We believe that the decision to end a pregnancy is best left to a woman in consultation with the family, doctors, or faith leaders she chooses to involve.

The religious values that guide our organizations call us to demonstrate compassion for any woman or family facing difficult circumstances related to pregnancy. As a woman makes a decision about herself and her family, we believe that it is neither our role — nor the government's — to stand in judgment, but rather to ensure that she has safe and legal access to whatever care she feels is necessary and best in her situation. Each woman is a moral agent who deserves dignity and respect. If she needs more time to make a pregnancy decision, it is more important that she make the right decision for herself and her family than that she make a hasty one.

A ban on abortion after an arbitrary gestational limit will only make a challenging situation worse. Indeed, when a woman is denied a later abortion, the consequences on her life and her family can be far-reaching, impacting their health, economic security, and well-being. We believe that any legislation about abortion should reflect the needs of people seeking services. Healthcare that does not include access to later abortion does not adequately serve the needs of women or society.

Our religious values also compel us to advocate for policies that empower and protect the poorest and most marginalized in our communities. Whenever bans or severe restrictions to abortion are enacted, those most negatively affected are women without the financial resources to access safe care elsewhere. We believe in standing with women who find themselves in difficult situations and therefore oppose policies, such as later abortion bans, that will disproportionately and unjustly compound the difficulties of families in our communities that are already struggling to make ends meet.

Naturally, people in this country have differing religious views on issues of pregnancy and parenting, including abortion. Freedom of belief is a core principle of our American democratic tradition. However, legislation that would limit access to abortion care has the practical effect of imposing one particular religious belief on all people, and thus represents a gross violation of the liberty to which every American is entitled by the Constitution. The proper role of government in the United States is not to privilege one set of religious views over others, but to protect each person's right and ability to make decisions according to their own beliefs and values.

Again, we urge you to oppose extreme legislation, including bans on abortion based on arbitrary gestational limits. Such legislation unfairly blocks a woman's access to safe healthcare options and unjustly denies her the freedom to make decisions according to her own beliefs and conscience. Instead, we ask that you support policies that show compassion for women and families, no matter their circumstances, and respect for every individual's religious liberty.

In faith,

Anti-Defamation League
Catholics for Choice
Central Conference of American Rabbis
Clergy Advocacy Board, Planned Parenthood Federation of America
Disciples for Choice
Disciples Justice Action Network
Episcopal Women's Caucus
Hadassah, The Women's Zionist Organization of America, Inc.
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Jewish Women International
Metropolitan Community Churches
Methodist Federation for Social Action
Muslims for Progressive Values
National Council of Jewish Women
Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice
Religious Institute
Union for Reform Judaism
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations
Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation
Women of Reform Judaism
Women's League for Conservative Judaism

For more information, contact Rev. Rob Keithan, Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, at rkeithan@rcrc.org or (202)628-7700 x28, Amy Cotton, National Council of Jewish Women, at amy@ncjwdc.org or (202)296-2558 x7 or Sara Hutchinson, Catholics for Choice, at shutchinson@catholicsforchoice.org or (202)986-6093.