

April 27, 2011

The Honorable Vincent Gray
John A. Wilson Building
Suite 504
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Mr. Mayor:

Thank you for your courageous protest against the federal budget deal that traded away of the rights of District citizens to use their own resources to help each other in difficult times in the federal budget deal. Once again, Congress and the Administration signaled their disdain for the rights and needs of the men and especially the women who live in our nation's capital. But you spoke out against this injustice, and for that we are grateful.

The District of Columbia's policy of providing Medicaid coverage for abortion was sympathetic, realistic and fair. Denying DC's ability to use local funds to pay for abortions discriminates against women, especially women of color and lower-income women, who are disproportionately affected by the ban.

Access to affordable, comprehensive reproductive and sexual healthcare options is key to the core principles of social justice to which we, the undersigned organizations, adhere. Abortion care is an integral element of healthcare and now access to that care has been effectively blocked for the women of the District who because of economic necessity, rely on DC's safety net programs.

We know you have heard from some conservative community and faith leaders who seek to present themselves as the sole voice for all those who care about the women of DC. Not happy with stripping DC of its rights and endangering the health and livelihoods of women who live in the District, some members of Congress continue to lecture you about what the people of DC want and need. Please be assured that those voices do not speak for the majority of Americans, both District residents and others, who support a woman's right to choose and access to options which allow her to exercise that choice.

Promoting and preserving social justice are vital elements of improving the quality of life for all District citizens. We thank you for your courageous stand and the DC Council Members who stood with you, and we applaud your efforts toward ensuring greater access to comprehensive reproductive health care services for all women in DC. We stand with you as you continue to fight for social justice and the rights of the women of the District of Columbia and their families. Please contact Sara Hutchinson, director domestic programs at Catholics for Choice at shutchinson@catholicsforchoice.org or 202-986-6093 if there is any other assistance we may provide to help you in reaching our common goals.

Sincerely,

Black Women's Health Imperative
Black Women for Reproductive Justice
Catholics for Choice
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health
Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice
SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective

cc: Members of the Council of the District of Columbia
US Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton