

Religious and Faith Based Organizations and Communities Oppose the Child Interstate Abortion Notification Act

March 27, 2012

US House of Representatives
Committee on the Judiciary
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Representative:

We, the undersigned religious and faith based organizations and communities, believe that all women, including young women, should have access to safe and legal abortion services. As such, we are writing to urge you to oppose the Child Interstate Abortion Notification Act (HR 2299), a bill that would harm young women by limiting that access.

The Child Interstate Abortion Notification Act is a shameful attempt to restrict a woman's constitutionally protected right to abortion, and one that targets a particularly vulnerable population: young women who turn to trusted adults in times of crisis. Specifically, this legislation would prohibit anyone, including clergy or a close family member, from accompanying minors across state lines for an abortion if they did not comply with parental notification laws in the minors' states of residence. This legislation also imposes a complex series of mandates on health care providers, requiring them to police their patients and enforce the parental involvement laws of the state in which they are practicing and the state in which the patient resides.

In an ideal situation, young women who face critical, time sensitive health issues such as unintended pregnancy would feel comfortable turning to their parents. However, the circumstances of real life can make this ideal impossible to achieve. Instead, young women who are pregnant as a result of rape or incest, or who fear severe or violent reprisals from their parents, often turn to another trusted adult for compassion, guidance, and assistance. In many cases, young people facing personal and family crises turn to clergy or a lay leader within their faith community for safe counsel and support. The Child Interstate Abortion Notification Act would discourage such behavior by criminalizing the grandparent, clergy member, counselor or other trusted adult who attempts to aid a minor in her time of need — even if that adult was not aware of the state's parental involvement laws. In the absence of a trustworthy support network, teen women may take matters into their own hands, endangering their health or their lives.

While we represent different faith traditions, our organizations and communities stand together in support of compassion, justice, and the dignity of all women, shared values that are grounded in respect for every woman's right to follow her own faith and conscience when making personal decisions. And, above all, we support the health and safety of all women. The health of young women is not something to be taken lightly. Congress cannot mandate healthy family communication and must not create laws that force young women to face unintended pregnancy alone. HR 2299 will deter young women from seeking help and guidance from trusted adults; the repercussions may indeed be tragic.

As representatives of faith communities and organizations, we strongly urge you to oppose HR 2299, and appreciate your serious consideration of this issue.

Respectfully,

Anti-Defamation League
Catholics for Choice
Concerned Clergy for Choice
Hadassah, The Women's Zionist Organization of America, Inc.
Jewish Reconstructionist Federation

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Jewish Women International
Methodist Federation for Social Action
National Council of Jewish Women
Presbyterian Voices for Justice
Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice
Religious Institute, Inc.
Spiritual Youth for Reproductive Freedom
Union for Reform Judaism
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations
Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation
Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual (WATER)
Women of Reform Judaism