

September 16, 2014

The Honorable Jackie Speier  
United States House of Representatives  
211 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Speier:

As organizations committed to protecting and improving women's health and rights, we write in support of the Access to Contraception for Women Servicemembers and Dependents Act of 2014. This bill ensures that all servicemembers and their dependents who rely on the military for health care have comprehensive contraceptive coverage and family planning counseling.

Women play a vital role in the U.S. military and currently constitute 16 percent of all active duty and reserve members of the military.<sup>i</sup> This bill would ensure that confidential, comprehensive, and medically accurate family-planning counseling becomes a guaranteed health service for servicewomen, and is offered by medical providers that have the most up-to-date, evidenced-based information regarding the full range of contraceptive methods available.

Ninety-seven percent of servicewomen are of reproductive age<sup>ii</sup> and studies suggest that servicemembers could benefit from receiving comprehensive family planning counseling.<sup>iii</sup> Additionally, servicewomen deployed overseas are often stationed in environments with unique challenges that require additional considerations in choosing the best contraception method. Meeting the needs of servicewomen's reproductive-health care is critical to ensure military readiness and mission accomplishment.

Unintended pregnancy can be prevented through comprehensive education and family-planning counseling. This bill would guarantee that such counseling is available at various points in a servicewoman's career, including during predeployment and deployment health-care visits, giving women the tools necessary to make informed decisions on whether, and when, to have a child.

Further, this bill requires TRICARE to offer insurance coverage of all FDA-approved methods of contraception with no cost-sharing. With this provision, the nearly 5 million women eligible for Department of Defense-based health insurance<sup>iv</sup> will have the same birth control coverage as federal employees and those who rely on private insurance coverage. Currently, active duty military have no cost-sharing for any prescriptions,

although non-active duty military and dependents must pay cost-sharing for birth control acquired outside a Military Treatment Facility (MTF).

This bill would also make available at MTFs a range of FDA-approved contraceptive methods, providing a critical health service to the high number — 41 percent — of deployed servicewomen who have difficulty obtaining a refill for their ideal contraception method.<sup>v</sup>

Finally, this bill improves servicewomen’s access to emergency contraception (EC) in two ways: first by codifying Department of Defense regulations that health-care providers at MTFs provide survivors of sexual assault with information regarding emergency contraception. Second, the bill requires MTFs to offer a sexual assault survivor EC upon her request.

We believe it is the duty of our military to provide the highest quality health care to all servicemembers and military dependents, women included, and therefore strongly support the Access to Contraception for Women Servicemembers and Dependents Act of 2014.

Thank you,

American Association of University Women (AAUW)  
American Civil Liberties Union  
American Humanist Association  
Catholics for Choice  
Center for Inquiry  
Center for Reproductive Rights  
Freedom From Religion Foundation, Inc.  
Freethought Society  
General Board of Church & Society, The United Methodist Church  
Ibis Reproductive Health  
Institute for Science and Human Values, Inc.  
Jewish Council for Public Affairs  
Jewish Women International  
John Snow, Inc (JSI)  
Military Association of Atheists & Freethinkers  
NARAL Pro-Choice America  
National Abortion Federation  
National Council of Jewish Women  
National Family Planning and Reproductive Health Association  
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health  
National Organization for Women  
National Partnership for Women & Families

National Women's Law Center  
Physicians for Reproductive Health  
Planned Parenthood Federation of America  
Population Connection Action Fund  
Population Institute  
Reproductive Health Technologies Project  
Service Women's Action Network  
Sexuality Information and Education Council of the U.S. (SIECUS)  
Society for Humanistic Judaism  
The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy  
Union for Reform Judaism  
Unitarian Universalist Association  
Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation  
Women of Reform Judaism

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<sup>i</sup> U.S. Department of Defense: *2012 Demographics: Profile of the Military Community*.  
[http://www.militaryonesource.mil/12038/MOS/Reports/2012\\_Demographics\\_Report.pdf](http://www.militaryonesource.mil/12038/MOS/Reports/2012_Demographics_Report.pdf). (last visited July 15, 2014).

<sup>ii</sup> Grindlay K, et. al., *Abortion Restrictions in the U.S. Military: Voices from Women Deployed Overseas*. *Women Health Issues*. 121, (2011).

<sup>iii</sup> Manski R, et. al., *Reproductive Health Access Among Deployed Servicewomen: A Qualitative Study*. *Military Medicine*. 179, (2014).

<sup>iv</sup> U.S. Department of Defense: *Evaluation of the TRICARE Program: Fiscal Year 2014 Report to Congress* (March 5, 2014).

<sup>v</sup> Grindlay K., *Unintended Pregnancy Among Active-Duty Women in the United States Military* *Obstetrics & Gynecology*. 121, (2013).