

Dear Secretary Blinken and Administrator Power,

As organizations dedicated to protecting and expanding global reproductive health, rights, and justice, including abortion access, we are heartened to hear that you maintain an unwavering commitment to sexual and reproductive health care.¹ The recent *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* Supreme Court decision is a public health emergency that has and will continue to threaten the health and lives of people seeking essential health care services, not just for those in the U.S. but also for people globally. We are glad to see those in USAID and the State Department recognizing and calling out the devastation that this decision will bring worldwide and reaffirming your commitment to protect and care for those you serve.

We look forward to working alongside you in this critical endeavor towards reproductive freedom, bodily autonomy, and dignity for people worldwide. We encourage you to start meeting this commitment ***today*** by authorizing USAID reproductive health funding to the full extent of the law. Under current law, U.S. foreign assistance may not be used for abortion services as a means of family planning.² This requirement, however, still allows USAID and the State Department to provide funding for abortion services in cases of rape, incest, and life endangerment.³ It also allows for abortion service information and counseling.⁴ However, USAID and the State Department do not and have never funded abortion services in these circumstances - even though they can do so without breaching any congressionally imposed limits on abortion funding.

Additionally, many organizations receiving U.S. assistance lack proper guidance from USAID and the State Department on the scope of the law and unduly limit the care they provide in fear of falling afoul of U.S. funding restrictions. Specifically they are afraid that if they offer abortion information or counseling, or provide abortion care in cases of rape, incest, and life endangerment, they will lose all their U.S. funding. In practice, this means that people are frequently denied often life-saving health information and that many victims of sexual assault and incest in medical emergencies are deprived of legal and necessary health care.

For too long, the U.S. government has restricted the reproductive healthcare offered to people in countries receiving foreign assistance, regardless of the legality of abortion care in those countries. Domestically, women and other people capable of pregnancy have been stripped of a fundamental right and you have rightly expressed your disappointment at this rollback. USAID and the State Department can take tangible steps to mitigate the harmful global impacts of the Supreme Court ruling, immediately, by clarifying the exceptions to U.S. restrictions on abortion funding.

¹ [Samantha Power Twitter June 27, 2022](#); Anthony Blinken, [Today's Supreme Court Decision](#), June 24, 2022

² Helms Amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961

³ Id.

⁴ Leahy Amendment to annual foreign operations appropriations acts since FY1995

Actions that USAID and the State Department can take to demonstrate a commitment to reproductive health, rights, and justice:

1. Issue clarifying guidance to grantees on what is permissible under the law: that US foreign assistance can be used to provide information and counseling on abortion consistent with local law and abortion services in cases of rape, incest and life endangerment.
2. Revise the Standard Provision on the Helms and Leahy Amendments using affirmative language to make clear what is permissible, not only what is prohibited.
3. Amend the USAID Family Planning and Abortion Requirements Compliance Training for greater clarity and participant comprehension.

We look forward to seeing bold action to support and protect global reproductive health and rights, including abortion access, and working with you towards a future where we all have the freedom to control our own bodies, safely care for our families, and live with dignity.

Sincerely,

Organizations listed here

CC:

Secretary Xavier Becerra, Department of Health and Human Services
Jennifer Klein, White House Gender Policy Council