February XX, 2015

President Barack Obama

The White House

1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW

Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama,

We are \_\_\_\_ organizations dedicated to promoting reproductive health and rights around the world. We write to urge the Administration to correct the unduly restrictive implementation of the Helms Amendment by issuing guidance to USAID and the State Department to support safe abortion services in the cases of rape, incest, and life endangerment, and to do so without concessions.

We are concerned that proposals are being considered that would enshrine special exemptions for groups that object even to providing *referrals* for life-saving abortions, or abortions to women who have been raped. We strongly oppose such exemptions, which put the interests of grant recipients ahead of the critical needs of some of the world’s most marginalized women—the very people whom our foreign assistance is intended to help. We also object to the establishment of a harmful policy under which an organization’s refusal to provide safe abortion services to a woman who has been raped or who faces a life-endangering pregnancy may not be considered when evaluating grant proposals.

Extending special protections to opponents of women’s health would represent a tremendous and unnecessary capitulation to groups that seek to eliminate safe access to abortion care altogether. Prioritizing their funding above women’s lives distorts the goals of foreign assistance and sets a dangerous precedent.

We call upon you to correct the unduly restrictive implementation of the Helms Amendment as soon as possible, and to do so without making harmful and unnecessary concessions that undermine women’s health and wellbeing.

Sincerely,

cc: Ms. Valerie Jarrett

Chair, White House Council on Women and Girls and Senior Adviser to the President

Ms. Tina Tchen

Assistant to the President and Chief of Staff to the First Lady

Executive Director, White House Council on Women and Girls

Ms. Gayle Smith

Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director, National Security Council