Women CEOs in US Speak out for Women’s Health and Rights Globally

Nearly Forty Women NGO Leaders Tell Congress to Keep Commitments to International Women's Health

WASHINGTON, March 2, 2011—Approximately 40 women who lead development, health, and human rights organizations sent a letter to Congress today, urging senators to keep the United States’ commitments to international women’s health and rights amidst the current scrutiny of the foreign assistance budget. The letter, spearheaded by Washington, D.C.-based nongovernmental organizations the Center for Health and Gender Equity (CHANGE) and Centre for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA), marks the first time women NGO executives have united to support continued foreign assistance for women’s health and rights abroad. The letter specifically calls for support of HIV and AIDS and reproductive health, which includes family planning and maternal health.

The letter notes that, “The House of Representatives has proposed cuts to the foreign assistance budget for the remainder of FY11 that would result in serious setbacks to the advancement of global women’s health and rights, and in turn, to global economic development overall. As women leading organizations that promote economic development, health, and human rights globally, we are writing to ask for your commitment to protect and prioritize foreign assistance dollars that support the well-being, rights, and empowerment of women and girls.”

The letter is critical as Congress debates a budget extension for the remainder of FY 2011 and considers funding for FY 2012, noted Serra Sippel, president of CHANGE.
“Foreign assistance has already been singled out by the House of Representatives as a target for cuts,” Sippel said. “Now we are asking senators to consider the enormous amount of good the United States has been able to accomplish with such a small portion of the budget, and to remember that it sets this nation apart. We’re also asking each member to approach women’s global health holistically and not pit funding streams for family planning, maternal health, and HIV and AIDS against each other. Right now, members have the opportunity to define their service in the 112th Congress by keeping women and girls healthy and alive through continued support and funding.”

In addition to Sippel and Carol Peasley of CEDPA, signatories include Cecile Richards of Planned Parenthood Federation of America, Helene Gayle of CARE USA, Marjorie J. Hill of Gay Men’s Health Crisis, Pamela Barnes of EngenderHealth, Ruth Messinger of American Jewish World Service, Nancy Northup of the Center for Reproductive Rights, Sarah Kambou of the International Center for Research on Women, Marcia Greenberger of the National Women’s Law Center, and Theresa Shaver of the White Ribbon Alliance for Safe Motherhood.

About the Center for Health and Gender Equity (CHANGE)

The Center for Health and Gender Equity (CHANGE) is a U.S.-based non-governmental organization that seeks to ensure that U.S. foreign policies and programs promote sexual and reproductive health and rights through effective, evidence-based approaches to prevention and treatment of critical reproductive and sexual health concerns, and through increased funding for critical international programs and institutions.

www.genderhealth.org

Complete List of Signatories

Nancy A. Aossey
President and CEO, International Medical Corps

Radhika Balakrishnan
Executive Director, Center for Women's Global Leadership

Pamela W. Barnes
President and CEO, EngenderHealth
Carmen Barroso  
Regional Director, IPPF/Western Hemisphere Region  

Kelly Blanchard  
President, Ibis Reproductive Health  

Paula Boland  
Executive Director, United Nations Association of the National Capital Area  

Kathy Bonk  
Executive Director, Communications Consortium Media Center (CCMC)  

Susan Davis  
President and CEO, BRAC USA  

Elizabeth Clark  
Executive Director, National Association of Social Workers  

Diana DuBois  
Executive Director, WellShare International  

Suzanne Ehlers  
President and CEO, Population Action International  

Helene D. Gayle  
President and CEO, CARE USA  

Sharon Gelman  
Executive Director, Artists for a New South Africa  

Adrienne Germain  
President, International Women’s Health Coalition  

Ronni Goldfarb  
President and CEO, Equal Access International  

Marcia Greenberger  
President, National Women’s Law Center  

Rev. Debra W. Haffner  
Executive Director, Religious Institute  

Catherine Hanssens  
Executive Director, Center for HIV Law and Policy  

Susan W. Hayes  
President and CEO, ReSurge International  

Marjorie J. Hill  
Chief Executive Officer, Gay Men’s Health Crisis (GMHC)
Eleanor Hinton Hoytt  
President and CEO, Black Women’s Health Imperative

Avis Jones-DeWeever  
Executive Director, National Council of Negro Women

Sarah Degnan Kambou  
President, International Center for Research on Women (ICRW)

Melanie Macdonald  
President and CEO, World Neighbors

Elizabeth Maguire  
President and CEO, Ipas

Ruth Messinger  
President, American Jewish World Service

Ester Neltrup  
President, Planet Aid

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