

Global Health, Empowerment and Rights (HER) Act [S.368; H.R.1055]

February 2020

Introduced: Senate – February 7, 2019; House of Representatives – February 7, 2019

Lead Sponsors: Sen. Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH); Rep. Nita Lowey (D-NY)

Legislative Goal and Effect:

On January 23, 2017, President Donald Trump reinstated the Mexico City Policy, also called the global gag rule, via presidential memorandum. The global gag rule is a U.S. foreign policy that, when enacted, prohibits foreign non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that receive certain categories of U.S. foreign assistance funds from advocating for abortion or providing abortion as a method of family planning. The Global Health, Empowerment and Rights (HER) Act would permanently end the GGR by removing dangerous eligibility restrictions on international recipients of U.S. global health assistance.

How it works:

- Would allow foreign organizations receiving U.S. aid to use non-U.S. funds to provide medical services that are legal in the U.S. and in the respective countries, including safe abortion.
- Would promote safe, ethical medical practices by removing discriminatory restrictions on essential health care services.
- Would support and encourage democratic participation, civic engagement, and freedom of speech abroad.
- Would allow foreign non-governmental organizations receiving U.S. aid to use non-U.S. funds to address the specific needs of the population, such as HIV prevention and treatment and maternal and child health, so long as these activities are legal in the U.S. and in the respective country.
- Would nullify any existing U.S. law or policy that interferes with these provisions.

Why it is important:

Passage of the Global HER Act would guarantee that U.S. foreign aid promotes health care that is free from stigma and discrimination, prioritizes women's health, and is consistent with the fundamental principles of the United States, including the right to free speech. The Act would prevent certain restrictions on comprehensive reproductive health care, including HIV/AIDS programs and safe abortion services. The Act would uphold a patient's right to informed choice, respect for the doctor/patient relationship, and the right of organizations to express their beliefs.

What you can do:

- As a constituent, call your Members of Congress and ask them to cosponsor the Global HER Act.
- As a Member of Congress, co-sponsor S.368 or H.R.1055 and encourage your colleagues to do the same.

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