



**Abortion is Health Care Everywhere: Saving the lives of millions of people around the world**

*The Abortion is Health Care Everywhere Act would repeal the Helms Amendment, which bars U.S. foreign assistance funding for abortion.*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**CHAPEL HILL, NC, March 23, 2023**— Senator Cory Booker (D-NJ) and Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) reintroduced the [Abortion is Health Care Everywhere Act](#). This is the first-ever legislation to repeal the Helms Amendment, a 50-year-old policy that bans the use of United States foreign assistance for abortion, putting an arbitrary line between abortion care and all other global health services.

Senators Richard Blumenthal, Tammy Duckwoth, Mazie Hirono, and Tina Smith also lead this critical legislation, which has 24 original cosponsors in the Senate. Representatives Barbara Lee, Ayanna Pressley, Diana DeGette, Norma Torres and Marilyn Strickland colead the Abortion is Health Care Everywhere Act in the House where it enjoys the support of 140 original cosponsors.

"For nearly 50 years, the racist, harmful Helms Amendment has barred U.S. foreign assistance from being used to offer abortion care, even in countries where abortions are legal. The United States should not stand in the way of health care and bodily autonomy in other countries. Developing countries bear the burden of 97% of all unsafe abortions. We must protect women's health around the globe. By singling out abortion as a restricted health service, the Helms Amendment reinforces efforts to criminalize abortion and heightens abortion-related stigma," **said Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky**. "I am proud to reintroduce the bicameral Abortion is Health Care Everywhere Act with Senator Booker and Representatives Lee, Pressley, DeGette, Strickland and Torres. Comprehensive reproductive health care, including safe, legal, and accessible abortion, is a human right."

Enacted in 1973, the Helms Amendment is found in the Foreign Assistance Act and has been passed as part of Congressional appropriations bills every year for nearly five decades. It is an antiquated, neo-colonialist policy that has, for nearly 50 years, curbed global reproductive and economic freedom around the world. The policy prohibits U.S. foreign aid from being used for ‘the performance of abortion as a method of family planning.’ But in practice, Helms has banned all U.S. foreign assistance funds from being used for **any** abortion care.

This policy exacerbates existing health disparities; and denies millions of mostly Black and brown people in low-to-middle income countries the care they need and want. And the harms of the Helms Amendment have only been made worse following the devastating Dobbs decision which has and will continue to reverberate globally, affecting the lives and ability to access abortion care for millions of people living thousands of miles away. This decision has emboldened anti-rights actors around the world and increased abortion stigma in dozens of countries. Many countries who have long used the Roe decision to bolster liberalizing their abortion laws now face challenges.

“For decades, many countries around the world relied on *Roe v. Wade* to expand access to abortion care in their own countries,” said **Senator Booker**. “In the wake of the disastrous decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson*, people across the globe have found their access to essential health services restricted. To ensure that all people have access to critical reproductive services, we must repeal the Helms Amendment and ensure that US foreign aid can be used for safe, legal abortion care overseas.”

The *Abortion is Health Care Everywhere Act* is an opportunity for the U.S. to fulfil its commitment to protecting and promoting the reproductive health and rights of people living overseas and to address the undeniable harm that the Dobbs decision has caused around the world.

“It is time for the United States to join the global community supporting reproductive justice, instead of undermining human rights with harmful policies that deny millions of people access to essential health-care services they want and need. For far too long, the U.S. has imposed neo-colonialist, racist values through foreign policies like the Helms Amendment that affect millions of people thousands of miles away, said **Dr. Anu Kumar, President and CEO, Ipas**. Every year, 35 million people have unsafe abortions, and millions suffer injuries and long-term disabilities as a result. And it is Black and brown women who live in resource-poor countries who bear the burden of the deeply unjust Helms Amendment. As it stands, the U.S. government is the only donor nation that neglects, stigmatizes and separates abortion care in its foreign assistance. Repealing the Helms Amendment would lift 50 years of repression and expand access to lifesaving abortion care for people around the world. This policy does nothing other than stigmatize a health procedure and the people who need.”

A broad coalition of global reproductive health, rights and justice advocacy, research, and service-delivery organizations celebrates this critical reintroduction. This group has been working to mitigate and address the harms caused by the Helms Amendment for over a decade. Additionally, the Abortion is Health Care Everywhere Act is endorsed by more than 180

organizations and quotes from several groups can be found below for inclusion in media coverage.

More information can be found at [repealhelms.org](http://repealhelms.org).

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