

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 12, 2017

The Honorable Gene L. Dodaro  
Comptroller General of the United States  
Government Accountability Office  
441 G Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro:

We write to request that the Government Accountability Office (GAO) examine the impact of President Trump's Presidential Memorandum signed on January 23, 2017, that reinstates the Mexico City Policy, also known as the Global Gag Rule. This memorandum expands the application of the policy to global health assistance furnished by the U.S. government, including through the United States Department of State (State), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Department of Defense (DoD).

Guidance released on March 2, 2017, requires foreign non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that receive family planning assistance to certify that they will not provide, counsel, or refer for abortion as a method of family planning, even in countries where abortion is legal, as a condition of eligibility for receiving U.S. funding. This policy also affects any U.S. NGOs that receive U.S. family planning assistance and have grants or cooperative agreements with foreign NGOs.

Further guidance released on May 15, 2017, expanded the application of the Global Gag Rule to global health assistance furnished by State, USAID, and DoD.

We are concerned that this policy will hurt women and families, U.S. tax dollars will be used less efficiently and U.S. global health efforts will be less effective and more expensive as a result of this policy. To that end, we respectfully request that the GAO conduct a comprehensive review of the newly imposed and expanded policy and produce a report.

We have included initial questions below to begin the research process, but will follow up with additional questions if supplementary guidance is released:

1. **Departments and agencies implicated:** What federal departments and agencies are covered by the original Memorandum and the expanded policy guidance? Within these departments and agencies, which U.S.-funded foreign assistance programs will be affected by this policy? Within each program, how many funding agreements are affected by the policy? What is GAO's best estimate on how many of these funding agreements will be terminated, or not renewed, because of the policy?

2. **Impact on global health assistance:** How much current global health assistance (including funding, technical assistance, commodities, and fellowships) provided by the U.S. government to foreign NGOs will need to be reprogrammed as a result of the reinstated and expanded policy, and where will the reprogrammed funds be invested? What is the effect of reprogramming this global health assistance? In addition, will interruptions in aid occur because of reprogramming?
3. **Assessment of programmatic impact:** What is the effect of the new rule on programs in Nigeria, Ethiopia, and Uganda, as they are the top three recipients of US family planning aid? How will the Global Gag Rule affect programmatic objectives and outcomes in the relevant departments and agencies? What are anticipated impacts on service delivery and health outcomes in affected communities? What safeguards could be put in place to protect patients of clinics that may be defunded under the Global Gag Rule where effective alternatives are not available? What mechanisms will be used to continue to monitor the impact of the policy across time and regions?

Thank you for your assistance with this request. If you have any questions, please contact [REDACTED] in Senator Jeanne Shaheen's office at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] in Sen. Susan Collins office at [REDACTED] or at [REDACTED].

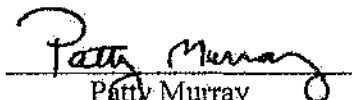
Sincerely,



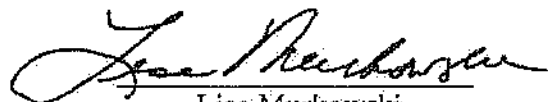
Jeanne Shaheen  
United States Senator



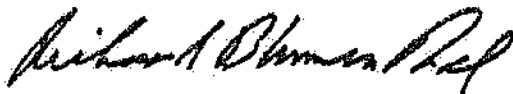
Susan M. Collins  
United States Senator



Patty Murray  
United States Senator



Lisa Murkowski  
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator