

Date: December 15, 2021
To: Ambassador Carol Z. Perez, Acting Under Secretary of State for Management
From: The Undersigned Foreign Service Officers
Through: Andrea Pestone Capellan, U.S. Agency for International Development

Subject: On Our Own: Diplomats Deserve Equal Access to Reproductive Health Services

All diplomats, and their family members, deserve the same access to timely, life-saving health care overseas as domestically, and when that is not possible for any reason—including host country law—to be afforded prompt medical evacuation to such care. Female diplomats are routinely denied access to full reproductive health care. Key examples include: inconsistent availability of rape kits, inconsistent availability of family planning services, including emergency contraceptives (plan B), medical abortion (mifepristone/misoprostol), inconsistent access to trained professionals, including, and specifically, obstetrician-gynecologists.

In drafting this letter we heard from diplomats who received no assistance from the State Department:

- When suffering a nearly fatal ectopic pregnancy,
- When a fertility treatment supported by the Medical Unit led to the need for a life-saving embryo reduction,
- When suffering a miscarriage at one of the most polluted posts in the world,
- When serving in a country where abortion was illegal and was referred by the Medical Unit to illegal local providers,
- When needing treatment for a urinary tract infection at a priority service post,
- When unable to access needed endocrinological testing locally after multiple pregnancy losses, and
- In being judged about our access to or use of reproductive choices from medical professionals.

We deserve access to the same rights we have in our own country when we serve overseas and demand that reproductive rights be guaranteed in the Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM), including:

- **Allowing medevac prior to 12 weeks gestation for access to reproductive health services,**
- **Requiring the State Department Medical Program include plan B, mifepristone/misoprostol, and rape kits at each overseas USG Medical Unit,**
- **Allowing medevac to access other related reproductive health services, such as endocrinological testing, perimenopausal and menopausal counseling and screenings,**
- **Requiring all Medical Units to develop contacts with, and maintain access to local, high-quality obstetric and gynecological medical professionals or offer medevac for high-quality care if it is unavailable locally, and**
- **Requiring all Medical Units and their staff to provide respectful, impartial care, that lacks judgment, to any diplomat regardless of their reproductive choices.**

Diplomats serving in Africa, South America, Europe & Eurasia, and Asia, who, when faced with reproductive health emergencies, were directed to independently access dangerous local options. Each accessed their lifesaving reproductive health services alone, paid for it themselves, and still

report trauma to this day. Instead of support from our Medical Units specifically deployed to these countries to provide healthcare to diplomats—40 percent of whom are women—we have been told time and time again, “You are on your own.” Some nearly died, many had long-lasting injuries, while others took on serious financial burdens to access the necessary and lifesaving care. The experience of these diplomats today mirrors the traumatizing experiences of American women decades ago when these rights were inaccessible in our country too. That those representing the United States abroad must needlessly suffer this fate today is shameful.

Below is just a portion of the stories shared with us:

[I] [c]can't really underscore how traumatizing that run of time was—very difficult emotionally and physically and certainly the lack of support impacted my ability to live and work comfortably at post.

I was scared and horrified and ashamed. I had to do extensive trauma therapy for it and it's still triggering.

In an email to MED: I was incredibly depressed and disheartened at the way the entire situation was handled. It has also undercut my confidence in the Embassy's ability to support my medical needs and those of my family. I hope that if another person has to undergo what I did, the same thing doesn't happen, and you don't tell her that you cannot support her medically-necessary procedure because it is an abortion.

In a January 28, 2021 Presidential Memorandum, “Memorandum on Protecting Women’s Health at Home and Abroad,” President Biden clearly outlined that, “Women should have access to the healthcare they need.” The directive continues, “It is the policy of my Administration to support women’s and girls’ sexual and reproductive health and rights in the United States, as well as globally.” On October 22, 2021, the White House doubled down on this commitment by issuing the first-ever National Strategy on Gender Equity and Equality. The Strategy prioritizes equitable health care stating that, “Health care is a right—not a privilege. All people deserve access to high-quality, affordable health care, . . . we will: . . . promote access to sexual and reproductive health and rights both at home and abroad.” The Department of State must take immediate action to effectuate these policies.

Per FAM 16 311, “In a situation where local medical facilities are inadequate to provide required services, travel to locations where such services can be obtained may be authorized.” In none of these cases did MED see fit for lifesaving interventions to be authorized. While certain elective orthopedic surgeries, dental procedures, and plastic surgeries may be covered by the State Department through a medical evacuation, lifesaving medical evacuations for reproductive care are routinely shouldered by female diplomats after the State Department refuses to assist. Diplomats representing America in countries across the world are denied access to the same services that are legal and readily available in the country we represent and told “You are on your own.”

We reiterate our request—no more or less than equitable access to adequate health care, to be enshrined in the FAM and available to diplomats and their family members worldwide.

Courtesy Copy:

Dr. Larry Padget, Bureau of Medical Services Director

Katrina Fotovat, Senior Official for the Office of Global Women's Issues

Ambassador Gina Abercrombie-Winstanley, Chief Diversity and Inclusion Office for the Office of Diversity and Inclusion

Nina Fite, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of Global Talent Management, Office of the Director General

Philippe Lussier, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Director General, Bureau for Global Talent Management

Jeanne Juliao, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Director General, Bureau for Global Talent Management

Karin Sullivan, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Director General, Bureau for Global Talent Management

USAID Counselor-Vacant

Paloma Adams-Allen, USAID Deputy Administrator for Management and Resources

Adetola Abiade, USAID Assistant to the Administrator for the Office of Human Capital and Talent Management

Ismael Martinez, USAID Acting Director for the Office of Civil Rights and Diversity

Eric Rubin, American Foreign Service Association President

Signature Pages

1. Balancing Act @ USAID Employee Resource Group
2. USAID/Department of State Military Spouse and Family Employee Resource Group Board
3. Andrea Pestone Capellán, USAID
4. Rachel Sorey, USAID
5. Annie Wallace, USAID
6. Heather Fabrikant, DOS
7. Kristin Shouba, USAID
8. Gina Cady, USAID
9. Samantha Needham, DOS
10. Wendy Rejan, DOS
11. Andrea F. Gastaldo, DOS
12. Alyssa Perkinson, DOS
13. Ariel Kersky, DOS
14. Camille Dockery, DOS
15. Anna C. Thompson, DOS
16. Keabra OpongBrown, DOS
17. Kim Durand-Proud, DOS
18. Katherine A. Ntiamoah, DOS
19. Alicia Contreras-Donello, USAID
20. Sarah Stricker, DOS
21. Emilie Bruchon, DOS
22. Sarah M. Belousov, DOS
23. Nora Madrigal, USAID
24. Rebecca Robinson, USAID
25. Laura Cizmo, USAID
26. Travis N. Travis, DOS
27. Caitlin Hall, USAID
28. Rafael Hernandez, DOS
29. Joanna C. Wulfsberg, DOS
30. Jami J. Thompson, DOS
31. Dawn Suni, DOS
32. Meghan Waters, USAID
33. Jennifer Bergeson-Lockwood, USAID
34. Wendy Rich-Orloff, USAID
35. Gillian R. Apfel, DOS
36. Sara Werth, USAID
37. Andreea Surdu, USAID
38. Jacqueline Schumacher, USAID
39. Rachel Smith-Levy, DOS
40. Claire T. Bea, DOS
41. Allison D. Michaels, DOS
42. Jay M. Sorenson, DOS

43. Stephanie Ullrich, USAID
44. Elizann Carroll, DOS
45. James A. Burns, DOS
46. Mia Ter Haar, DOS
47. Eleanor TanPiengco, USAID
48. Heather Wirick, USAID
49. Michelle Jennings, USAID
50. Avi Richman, USAID
51. Margaret Benavente, USAID
52. Sarah Ziebell, DOS
53. Cristian Martinez-LuSane, DOS
54. Kimberly McConnell, DOS
55. Christine Getzler Vaughan, DOS
56. Miranda Beckman, USAID
57. Elizabeth M. Meravi, DOS
58. Rebecca Dockery, DS
59. Juan Carlos Rodriguez, USAID
60. Alexander H. Villec, DOS
61. Naureen M. Nalia, DOS
62. Natalie Thunberg, USAID
63. Jennifer L. Goldstein, DOS
64. Alicia K. Edwards, DOS
65. Jennifer Nikolaeff, USAID
66. Jennifer S. Sudweeks, DOS
67. Adam S. Ferguson, DOS
68. Nina S. Lewis, DOS
69. Tricia Siaso, USAID
70. Tarina Speidel, DOS
71. Katherine Tarr, DOS
72. Nelson Tamayo, DOS
73. Danna Van Brandt, DOS
74. Orna T. Blum, DOS
75. Jane Chongchit Houston, DOS
76. Jack Adrien, USAID
77. Rachel Cintron, USAID
78. Sharon M. Rose, DOS
79. Derek H. Wright, DOS
80. Diana Braunschweig, DOS
81. Nadia Shairzay Ahmed, DOS
82. Stephanie D. Lawton, DOS
83. Jeffrey A. Tomasevich, DOS
84. Amy McQuade, USAID
85. Jean McAnerney, DOS
86. Deborah Perlman, USAID
87. Mely Aimee Jacobson, DOS

88. Jessica Faber, USAID
89. Michelle Dworkin, USAID
90. Megan Naylor, DOS
91. Eve Bentovim, DOS
92. Christina Cairns, USAID
93. Gary Jahn, USAID
94. Amanda Fong, USAID
95. Patrick Robison, USAID
96. Kristin Weaver, DOS
97. Lillian Benjamin, USAID
98. Courtney Maloney, USAID
99. Emily Revis, USAID
100. Maria Televantos, USAID
101. Charlee Doom, USAID
102. Lynn Schneider, USAID
103. Robyn Bertholon, USAID
104. Leah Kaplan, USAID
105. Jessica Tesoriero, DOS
106. Eileen Lawless, USAID
107. Nichole Graber, USAID
108. Ashley Frost, USAID
109. Rayma Baran, USAID
110. Dinah Zeltser-Winant, USAID
111. Sarah Swatzburg, DOS
112. Alexandra Montealegre, USAID
113. Jennifer Noisette, DOS
114. Karen Amanda H. Brown, DOS
115. Taryn N. Kaili, DOS
116. Adriana Vieco, USAID
117. Morgan Grenier, DOS
118. Dawn Bruno, FCS
119. Mimi Asnes, DOS
120. Taylor Rose Bartlett, DOS
121. Natalia Petroni, DOS EFM
122. Holly R. Pelas, DOS
123. Tor Edwards, USAID
124. Michael "Patrick" Ellsworth, DOS
125. Isabella Genta, USAID
126. Merideth Fox, USAID
127. Michelle K. Warren, DOS
128. JC Windham, DOS
129. Sita Farrell, DOS
130. Laura Thibault, DOS
131. Aviva Kutnick, USAID
132. Michelle Corzine, USAID

133. Kristen Smart, CS DOS, DOS EFM
134. Robert G. Ehrmann, DOS
135. Sonia Miranda Palacios, DOS
136. Oleksandra Price, USAID
137. Maria Eby, DOS EFM
138. Christopher D. Johnson, DOS
139. Sarah Ancas, DOS
140. Alex Auman, DOS
141. Janel, Heird, DOS
142. Carolee Williamson, DOS
143. Elizabeth Isaman, DOS
144. Ann Guardian, USAID
145. Jean Akers, DOS
146. Lauren M. Ryan, DOS
147. Katherine Reniers, USAID
148. Tara Logan, DOS
149. Jennifer Prillman, DOS
150. Alexander N. Daniels, DOS
151. Sang Lee, USAID
152. Erica Marrero, DOS
153. Grace Clegg, DOS
154. Audrey Hseih, DOS
155. Kristina Brown, DOS
156. Christopher P. Geurtsen, DOS
157. Kendra Arbaia-Sundal, DOS
158. Katie Frank, USAID
159. Fay Haselkorn, USAID
160. Kim Beauchamp, DOS
161. Kimberly R. Harmon, DOS
162. Erin Wroblewski, USAID
163. Doering S. Meyer, DOS
164. Shona Carter, DOS
165. Elizabeth Callendar, USAID
166. Suzanne Balsam Meyeroff, DOS
167. Elena Augustine, DOS
168. Linda M. Johnson, DOS
169. Leah Wagner, DOS EFM
170. Jennifer Karsner, USAID
171. Bryn West, DOS
172. Alice Caruso, DOS
173. Mae Yan, DOS EFM
174. Johanna Wilkie, USAID
175. Justin Gunnoe, USAID
176. Jenna Diallo, USAID
177. Dylan Stearns, USAID

178. Darci Pauser, DOS
179. Elizabeth Biermann de Lancie, DOS
180. Cynthia Hoof, DOS
181. Naomi Walco , DOS
182. Angela Palazzolo, DOS
183. Kraig Kanahela, DS
184. Suzanne Yountchi, DOS
185. Lisa Nicole Andonovska, DOS
186. Rachael Cullins, DOS
187. Vanna Lavery, DOS
188. Bridget Binder, DOS
189. Kathleen Meilahn, DOS
190. Isabelle Mullin, USAID
191. Karen Koprince, USAID
192. Grace Hwa, USAID
193. Kenneth Dunn, USAID
194. Paula Brainard, DOS
195. Betsy Meyer, DOS
196. Adam Norikone, USAID
197. Masami Tanaka, DOS
198. Amber Moore, DOS
199. James Patrick "JP" McCormick,
DOS
200. Omaira T. Fleming, DOS
201. Molly Amador, DOS
202. Andreea D. Ursu-Williams, DOS
203. Rachel Goldstein, USAID
204. Jacob Morrin, USAID
205. Katia Bennett, DOS
206. Noor Oweis, DOS