

## ***Faith and Religious Groups Oppose Price for Secretary of Health and Human Services***

January 30, 2017

The Honorable Lamar Alexander, Chair  
Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions  
US Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Orrin Hatch, Chair  
Senate Committee on Finance  
US Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray, Ranking Member  
Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions  
US Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Hon. Ron Wyden, Ranking Member  
Senate Committee on Finance  
US Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators,

The undersigned religious and faith-based organizations and communities write to share our serious concerns about the nomination of Representative Tom Price (R-GA) to be the next Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS). Rep. Price's record shows he opposes several values around which our diverse traditions are firmly united — that each of us deserves access to quality, comprehensive health care without risking other basic needs; the ability to make personal decisions without governmental interference; respect for religious liberty; as well as dignity and compassion.

**We urge you to reject Rep. Price's confirmation to the critical cabinet post of Secretary of the US Department of Health and Human Services. His leadership could threaten the health and well-being of millions, most harming those struggling to make ends meet, disproportionately including women, people of color, and others already experiencing barriers to health care.**

Throughout his career, Rep. Price has demonstrated contempt for the majority consensus that we all deserve access to affordable, quality health coverage, regardless of gender, income, race, or other factors. Championing legislation to dismantle the Affordable Care Act (ACA), Rep. Price drafted a proposal that would leave individuals without affordable, quality coverage. Experts from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities estimated his ACA replacement plan could alarmingly take away insurance or access to care from millions who have gained it thanks to the health reform law. Further, the congressman has led efforts to gut social safety net programs, including Medicaid and Medicare. For example, Price-supported proposals to institute deeply harmful cuts to Medicaid would force states to eliminate critical health benefits or reduce program eligibility; individuals and families would be forced to choose between their health, financial future, or other essentials. Such efforts would most harm the health and economic security of individuals struggling to get by, falling hardest on women and women of color.

Rep. Price is also dangerously out of touch with women's health needs. He expressed troubling skepticism about women facing barriers to contraception, wrongly declaring that "not one" woman has experienced such obstacles — despite clear data to the contrary. Research shows that more than half of women between 18-34 years old, including Latina and African American women, faced cost barriers to prescription birth control; thanks to the ACA, 55 million women have gained affordable access to the

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birth control that works best for them. Rep. Price has further cosponsored legislation to bar access to comprehensive reproductive health care and coverage, supporting measures to push safe abortion out of reach. Relatedly, he has led bills to restrict access to comprehensive care while imposing a single religious viewpoint on everyone. For instance, he sponsored a proposal to enshrine into law one faith perspective about when life begins as well as a bill to permit doctors, insurers, and other health entities to use religion to discriminate by denying care or coverage that doesn't align with their faith. Backing these measures — which could outlaw several forms of birth control and other key services — indicates Price would not only place a woman's health in jeopardy by denying care, but defy our nation's bedrock principle of religious liberty. His leadership could let politicians interfere in an individual's ability to make personal health decisions according to their own beliefs and values.

Also of deep concern is Rep. Price's opposition to the principle that we all deserve fair treatment under the law — a belief that could leave people without protection from health system discrimination. The congressman has consistently worked against efforts to make existing law more inclusive. Rejecting values that affirm compassion and the dignity of all people, he voted against the Matthew Shepherd and James Byrd, Jr Hate Crimes Prevention Act and opposed reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act. Given this record, Rep. Price's HHS leadership could mean women, immigrants, people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, gender-nonconforming, or queer (LGBTQ), and others experiencing barriers to health and safety might be refused health care, safety, or related services simply because of their gender, sexual orientation, immigration status or other factors.

As organizations and communities guided by diverse faiths, we are united in our belief that the cabinet member who leads the Department of Health and Human Services must be committed to advancing access to affordable, quality health care for all, and the basic ideals that we each deserve dignity, fair treatment, compassion, and respect to make our own personal, faith-informed decisions about our health and future — regardless of income, gender, race, or any other factor. Rep. Price's record shows he rejects these values and commitments. **We fear he would threaten the health and well-being of individuals and families nationwide and thus respectfully urge you to reject Rep. Price's confirmation as HHS Secretary.**

*For more information, please contact Amy Cotton, Senior Policy Manager, National Council of Jewish Women, [amy@ncjwdc.org](mailto:amy@ncjwdc.org) or 202 375 5067.*

Sincerely,

Ameinu (Our People)  
Bend the Arc Jewish Action  
Catholics for Choice  
Habonim Dror North America  
Jewish Labor Committee  
Jewish Women International (JWI)  
Keshet  
Methodist Federation for Social Action  
Moishe Kavod House  
National Council of Jewish Women

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Planned Parenthood Federation of America's Clergy Advocacy Board  
Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association  
Reconstructionist Rabbinical College/Jewish Reconstructionist Communities  
Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice  
Religious Institute  
SisterReach  
T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights  
Unitarian Universalist Association  
Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation  
Workmen's Circle

CC The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Majority Leader  
The Honorable Charles Schumer, Minority Leader