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**As of December 2008*

Jodi Magee

Executive Director

July 8, 2009

Honorable Barbara Mikulski
United States Senate
Washington, DC

Dear Senator Mikulski:

Physicians for Reproductive Choice and Health applauds the introduction of your amendment to address women's preventive care in the health care reform. For health reform to be meaningful for half of the U.S. population, health reform legislation must treat reproductive health care like all other primary and preventive care.

As physicians, we know that women need comprehensive reproductive health care to stay healthy and alive. Reproductive health care is cost-effective and helps women avoid negative health and economic outcomes. Preventive reproductive health care encompasses counseling, testing, and treatment for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs); screening for cervical, breast, and other gynecological cancers; and family planning services, medications, and devices. These services are basic health care, and we support your efforts to exempt them from cost-sharing requirements.

Thank you, too, for including community health centers in your amendment—health reform must incorporate this vital service. Many of these clinics provide comprehensive reproductive health care to women who would otherwise go without care. Publicly funded family planning allows women in the U.S. to prevent 1.94 million unintended pregnancies every year.

Health reform offers an opportunity to ensure access to and coverage of reproductive health care for everyone, while providing services of higher quality and at lower costs in a better regulated market. To meet our nation's need for health reform that serves both men and women, Congress should require that public and private insurance plans reduce gender-based health disparities. The final legislation must provide all U.S. residents with meaningful access to comprehensive reproductive health care, including contraception, maternity care, and abortion services.

Thank you for your leadership on this critical issue. Please call on us for patient stories, medical evidence, and any other help we can offer as the reform legislation progresses.

Sincerely,

Suzanne T. Poppema, MD
Board Chair, Physicians for Reproductive Choice and Health