



June 23, 2009

Barack Obama
The President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. President,

The International AIDS Women's Caucus (IAWC) writes to you with deep concern regarding the recent appointment of Ms. Alexia Kelley as the new director of the Department of Health and Human Services' Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives.

IAWC is an international network of organizations and women affected and infected with the HIV/AIDS who initially came together in Amsterdam at the VIII International Conference on AIDS in 1992. We came together because we believe that women's issues were not being adequately addressed at the international, regional and national levels. Hence, we pride ourselves in promoting the human rights of women on a global scale.

We are expressing our concern to you about Ms. Kelley because of her positions on reproductive rights and specifically contraception. Access to reproductive health and to safe and effective counseling and access to contraceptive methods are critical to their reproductive health and rights for all women, and especially for those living with HIV. Because the Department of Health and Human Services is an important implementing agency for PEPFAR, we are concerned that PEPFAR programs will continue to undermine and put at risk women's health and rights, particularly by denying them access to information and contraception methods.

We have seen over the past eight years a disregard for sexual and reproductive health and rights and a rejection of science and public health best practices, as many PEPFAR programs have focused on ideologically driven abstinence-only-until-marriage interventions, and have failed to integrate women's reproductive health services in a meaningful way that puts patient's needs at the center of health care. We have been very pleased by your stated support to re-focus U.S. health programs like PEPFAR to reflect best practices and put science back on the map. During your presidential campaign, a factsheet published by *Obama for America* stated that you

Fundación para Estudio e Investigación de la Mujer (FEIM)
Paraná 135, piso 3, dto.13, C1017AAC, Buenos Aires, Argentina
Tel/Fax: (+54-11) 4372-2763 · feim@feim.org.ar

c/o Center for Health and Gender Equity (CHANGE)
1317 F Street, Suite 400, Washington, D.C., 20004 USA
Tel: 1.202.393.5930 · Fax: 1.202.393.537 · change@genderhealth.org

believed that PEPFAR should be reauthorized in a way that “allows best practices – not ideology – to drive funding for HIV/AIDS programs.” And in your inauguration speech, you so eloquently articulated your vision for a new America, stating that, “We will restore science to its rightful place...”

We welcome your support for science and best practices, however, we have profound reservations about the influence of Ms. Kelley—who is ideologically opposed to evidence-based condom promotion and family planning integration—over the potentially life-saving programs of PEPFAR. We are deeply grateful for your efforts to quickly eliminate the Mexico City Policy and refund UNFPA, as well as for the bold statements that you and members of your administration have made in support of evidence-based health interventions and sexual and reproductive rights. We hope that future relevant appointments will bolster – not undermine – a human rights approach when it comes to the sexual and reproductive health for women worldwide.

Please know that the International AIDS Women’s Caucus (IAWC) can serve as an important resource for your administration as our members are experts with decades of experience addressing issues around HIV and AIDS and sexual and reproductive health and women’s rights.

Thank you, Mr. President, for your consideration of our concerns.

Respectfully,



Mabel Bianco
General Coordinator,
International AIDS Women’s Caucus
President,
Fundación para Estudio e Investigación
de la Mujer (FEIM)



Serra Sippel
Co-Coordinator,
International AIDS Women’s Caucus
President,
Center for Health and Gender Equity
(CHANGE)

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