The Global Gag Rule, also known as the “Mexico City Policy,” is a policy that impedes women’s access to healthcare, specifically in regards to accurate, safe, and legal reproductive health options. The law formally forces U.S. nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) receiving U.S. family planning funding to choose between (1) accepting the U.S. family planning funds and thus, “be prohibited from providing abortion counseling, referrals, or even advocacy efforts and from providing abortions outside of the three exceptions” or (2) refusing U.S. family planning funds and then “attempt to secure alternative sources of funding in order to keep health clinics open” (1).

The global gag rule was first instituted in 1984 by the Reagan administration. With each subsequent administration, this rule has been removed to be reinstated again 4-8 years later (2). Most recently, President Trump reinstated the global gag rule within his first week in office. These administration based changes cause dramatic uncertainty for these NGOs. As Planned Parenthood Action Fund President Cecile Richards said, “‘U.S. foreign aid should never be used as a tool to limit women’s access to health care or to impose unfair restrictions on the decision-making ability of independent organizations overseas. The women of the world need information and services, not censorship and restrictions” (2).

The Global HER Act seeks to eliminate the global gag rule as an option for future administrations. Because the global gag rule seriously impedes countries’ efforts to improve women’s health and undermines civic participation, we need our congressman to support the Global HER Act now!

References:
Title X is the sole federal grant dedicated to improving domestic access to comprehensive contraceptive and family planning services in the United States. This policy, instituted nearly 50 years ago, has been serving disproportionately low-income and young patients. Annually, the Title X program serves around 4 million people.

However, proposed changes to the rule by the Trump administration will drastically prevent these services from reaching those who historically already face barriers to care. The Title X Gag Rule, similar to the Global Gag Rule, will prevent centers providing services through Title X funding from providing comprehensive prenatal care. Providers will not be able to detail options concerning abortion services while also using the Title X funding allocated for the centers for such services. If patients are to explicitly request information about abortion services, providers must choose whether to forfeit funding and provide comprehensive information or to only supply the approved information, which excludes a majority of the details needed to make an informed decision.

The rule appears to be part of the Trump administration’s continued attack on Planned Parenthood, as 41% of Title X services are utilized by Planned Parenthood (1). If this domestic gag rule becomes law, there will be a severe limitation on the ability of Title X to provide high-quality healthcare. This should be seen as an attack on sexual health and reproductive rights.

In a July press conference, Mayor Pugh of Baltimore, Senators Hardin and Van Hollen of Maryland, and Congressmen Cummings, Ruppersberger, and Sarbanes of Maryland spoke out against this proposed law in a prominent Title X center in Baltimore City (2). Reach out to your legislators to insist that this proposed domestic gag rule is an attack on women’s rights.

References: