

California State Legislature
State Capitol
1315 10th St.
Sacramento, CA 95814

March 28, 2017

Dear Members of the California Assembly and Senate,

We, the undersigned faith-based organizations and religious groups dedicated to promoting and protecting sexual and reproductive health and rights, urge you to support AB 569, the Reproductive Health Non-Discrimination Act (RHNDA).

We represent millions of people of faith in California. We believe access to healthcare is a basic human right. We affirm women as moral agents who have the capacity, right and responsibility to make their own decisions about sexuality, reproduction and their families. We support access to abortion, contraception and other reproductive health services, and oppose public policies that impose belief by religious fiat.

While we agree religious voices and traditions are a vital part of public discourse, we recognize the pluralistic society in which we live. Conservative faith voices do not represent the vast majority of people of faith from the wide diversity of religious traditions. Our faith charges us to respect the freedom of belief, a core principle in our American democracy. Americans strongly reject the use of religion as a tool to limit access to healthcare. The proper role of government in the United States is not to privilege one set of religious views over others, but to protect each person's right and ability to make decisions according to their own beliefs and values. The RHNDA would prevent the interests and bottom line of institutions from usurping the health and well-being of those in need of care.

The religious values that guide our organizations call us to demonstrate compassion, support and respect for conscience. All individuals should be free to make reproductive health decisions according to their own conscience. We strongly believe that employers' beliefs must not infringe on an individual's right to access the healthcare he or she needs.

Religious freedom honors individual conscience, and guarantees us the freedom to hold any belief we choose without government interference. The RHNDA protects that right of conscience-based decisions and prohibits practices that trump others' civil rights. We should strive to expand civil rights protections, not curtail them.

The RHNDA ensures that residents of California can make their own private health decisions, based on their own consciences and with their own physicians, without fear of facing discrimination in their workplace. Using religion as a tool to single out and control the behavior of those whose beliefs are different is wrong and antithetical to our faith traditions of protecting human dignity.

People of faith across California support policies that respect the ability of women and men to make moral decisions about their lives. For these reasons, we urge you to support the protection of civil rights in California by supporting the RHNDA.

In faith,

Bend the Arc: A Jewish Partnership for Justice

California Church IMPACT

Catholics for Choice

Church in Ocean Park

Global Justice Institute

Interfaith Communities United for Justice and Peace (ICUJP)

Jewish Community Relations Council

Keshet

Metropolitan Community Churches

Muslims for Progressive Values

National Council of Jewish Women, California

Rev. Diane Weible, Northern California Nevada Conference, United Church of Christ

Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism

Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice

Unitarian Universalist Justice Ministry of California

Western Methodist Justice Movement