

House Rules Committee Chairwoman Louise Slaughter announced that she and 21 other members of Congress were “disappointed” with the recent policy limiting women’s health care options under the pre-existing conditions plan. Slaughter, a longtime leader on women’s rights and co-chair of the “Pro-Choice Caucus,” encouraged the Administration to be more sensitive to women’s rights as it works to implement the historic health care legislation that was signed into law in March.

Below is a copy of the letter. A [signed pdf of the letter](#) is also available.

The Honorable Kathleen Sebelius

Secretary

The Department of Health and Human Services 200 Independence Avenue, S.W.

Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Sebelius,

As a staunch defender of women’s access to health care, I am disappointed with the recent announcement restricting women’s access to legal health care services in the Pre-Existing Condition Insurance Plan (PCIP). The clarification, issued by the Department of Health and Human Services, prohibits certain legal reproductive health services from coverage in the PCIP, whether the PCIP is run by the federal government or by individual states.

I urge you to continue to move forward to expand women's access to care, and not narrow the scope of care available. The federal government should not exclude previously uninsured women with pre-existing conditions from accessing legal reproductive health care services.

I am concerned that limiting the range of services that women can access will affect how women and their physicians make private medical decisions. In order to be eligible to enroll in the PCIP, women must both have a pre-existing condition and be uninsured for 6 months. Women with pre-existing conditions may be in medically vulnerable positions, when health considerations and life considerations are most intertwined and complicated.

While I express my concern with this recent clarification for the PCIP, I support your overall commitment to ensure that women have a full range of health care services. I am eager to work with you as implementation of health reform moves forward to expand women's access to health care and a full range of reproductive and preventative health services.