Dear Secretary Pompeo,

As U.S. organizations that promote health and human rights, we write to express strong opposition to any attempts by the United States Department of State to censor U.S. diplomats, or any mission staff or partners. Any such effort would jeopardize global health while undermining decades of global consensus and progress.

Specifically, we are concerned by recent reports that senior officials are considering prohibiting the use of well-defined technical terms, such as "sexual and reproductive health," "comprehensive sexuality education," and other terms relating to sex, sexuality, and gender. We are further concerned by U.S. efforts to roll back international consensus on these issues. For nearly 25 years, the international community has united consistently in support of sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, as established in the 1994 Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. In 2015, the international community re-committed to take action to improve sexual and reproductive health and realize reproductive rights globally through the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights are fundamental to gender equality, as well as women’s, girls’ and young people’s empowerment and decision-making. By banning the use of these terms and support for these vital issues, the U.S. isolates itself and sends the message that advancing an extreme political agenda matters more than the health and rights of individuals and communities around the world.

This unprecedented proposal erases critical aspects of people’s health and lives. This, and previous attempts by Administration officials to remove references to “gender equality”, “adolescents”, evidence-based programs, “gender-based violence”, and transgender people, among others, from internationally negotiated documents, State Department reports, and domestic U.S. policies, aims to severely curtail progress on policies supporting gender equality and the health and human rights of women, girls and marginalized populations, including adolescents and LGBTQIA individuals.

Lastly, this proposal—and ongoing self-censorship within various agencies and bureaus—will have detrimental impacts on longstanding U.S. global health priorities such as reducing HIV and AIDS, maternal mortality, and reproductive cancers, among others. This proposal could foster confusion and cautiousness among implementers and could further stigmatize those seeking comprehensive healthcare services.

We urge you to reverse and prevent any future guidance or policy that prohibits the free speech of diplomats, mission staff, and partners or that compromises the health and wellbeing of women, men, young people, LGBTQIA individuals, communities, and families. We look forward to your response.
Sincerely,

Advocates for Youth
AIDS United
American Jewish World Service
American Medical Student Association
American Society for Reproductive Medicine
Amnesty International USA
AVAC
Better World Campaign
CARE USA
Catholics for Choice
Center for Biological Diversity
Center for Constitutional Rights
Center for Health and Gender Equity (CHANGE)
Center for Reproductive Rights
Common Defense
Council for Global Equality
Demand Progress
Feminist Majority Foundation
Foreign Policy for America
GirlForward
Girls Inc.
Global Fund for Women
Global Justice Center
Global Justice Institute, Metropolitan Community Churches
Global Rights for Women
Global Woman P.E.A.C.E. Foundation
Global Women's Institute
GLSEN
GreeneWorks
Guttmacher Institute
Heartland Alliance International
Human Rights Campaign
In Our Own Voice: National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda
interACT: Advocates for Intersex Youth
International Action Network for Gender Equity & Law
International Center for Research on Women (ICRW)
International Planned Parenthood Federation/Western Hemisphere Region
International Rescue Committee
International Women's Health Coalition
International Youth Alliance for Family Planning
Ipas
Jewish World Watch
John Snow, Inc. (JSI)
Milaan Foundation
MPact Global Action for Gay Men’s Health and Rights
NARAL Pro-Choice America
National Abortion Federation
National Asian Pacific American Women’s Forum (NAPAWF)
National Center for Transgender Equality
National Institute for Reproductive Health
National Network of Abortion Funds
National Organization for Women
National Partnership for Women & Families
National Women’s Health Network
National Women’s Law Center
Open Society Foundations
OutRight Action International
Oxfam America
PAI
Partners In Health
People For the American Way
Physicians for Reproductive Health
Plan International USA
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
Population Connection Action Fund
Population Institute
Promundo-US
Public Citizen
Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS)
Shadhika
Synergía - Initiatives for Human Rights
The AIDS Institute
The United Methodist Church - General Board of Church and Society
Treatment Action Group
Union for Reform Judaism
United Nations Association of the United States
UPIC Health
URGE: Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equity
Win Without War
Women Graduates-USA
Women of Reform Judaism
Women's Refugee Commission
Woodhull Freedom Foundation