October 20, 2017

The Honorable Scott Lloyd
Director, Office of Refugee Resettlement
Administration for Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
330 C Street, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Mr. Lloyd:

On behalf of the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine, we write to express serious concerns about reports of women and adolescents in Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) shelters being denied access to reproductive health care, specifically access to abortion.¹ All women and adolescents held in federal custody should be able to access evidence-based, comprehensive reproductive health services, including abortion care.²

Every woman should be able to access the reproductive health care she needs, including abortion, no matter their age, income, incarceration, or immigration status.³ Safe, legal abortion is a necessary component of women’s health care. When abortion care is illegal or highly restricted, women resort to unsafe means to end an unwanted pregnancy, including self-inflicted abdominal and bodily trauma, ingestion of dangerous chemicals, self-medication with a variety of drugs, and reliance on unqualified abortion providers.⁴ By obstructing basic access to safe and legal abortion, ORR is risking the health and lives of women and adolescents in its custody. ORR’s action also appears to be a violation of the terms of the Flores v. Reno Settlement Agreement.

No woman or girl should face political interference in their health care decisions, including while she is in an ORR shelter, or held in any federally-funded detention facility.⁵ In addition, children, whether unaccompanied or accompanied, should receive timely, comprehensive medical care that is culturally and linguistically sensitive by medical providers trained to care for children. This care should be consistent throughout all stages of the immigration processing pathway.

Sincerely,

Haywood L. Brown, MD, FACOG  Fernando Stein, MD, FAAP  Tamera Coyne-Beasley, MD, MPH, FSAHM
President     President   President

⁵ Ibid.