



November 17, 2022

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
437 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
304 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 205

Dear Leader Schumer, Minority Leader McConnell, Chairman Leahy, and Ranking Member Shelby:

I am writing to you today as the President of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC). Our organization serves as the public policy arm of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), the nation's largest Protestant denomination with over 50,000 churches and congregations and nearly 14 million members. As Congress presses toward either completing the appropriations process or passing another continuing resolution by the end of December 16, I write to convey the [concerns](#) of Southern Baptists in these negotiations.

Southern Baptists support the inclusion of key pro-life riders, such as the Hyde Amendment, because of what they represent and their importance in this time of deep division in our nation. Not only do these riders save lives, many, like the Weldon Amendment, protect the consciences of millions of Americans and maintain national unity over a sensitive issue. Both the Senate and House appropriations bills strip these and other important pro-life protections, actions that are unacceptable in the minds of countless constituents who do not want a dime of their resources supporting the abortion industry in any way, shape, or form.

Just as last year, the Hyde Amendment has again not been included in the initial Labor-HHS appropriations bill. The Hyde Amendment prevents Medicaid from



covering the cost of abortion, and protects American consciences. At the 2021 Annual Meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention, messengers unanimously approved a [resolution](#) condemning efforts to strip Hyde from any federal appropriations bill and called upon Congress to uphold all pro-life riders.

We are all made in the image of God endowed with immeasurable worth from conception until natural death. And we strongly object to tax dollars being used for what we believe to be a great moral wrong. It is estimated that the Hyde Amendment has saved over two million lives since it was enacted.

Additionally, the appropriations bills again removed the Weldon Amendment. The amendment protects the rights of conscience for healthcare professionals and institutions by preventing HHS from denying funding to recipients that refuse to provide, pay for, or refer for abortion. The budget also removes the Dornan (Hyde protections in the District of Columbia) and would also prohibit any president from re-instituting the Mexico City Policy, reestablished and expanded by President Donald Trump, as the Protecting Life in Global Health Assistance policy.

Just as they were ultimately included in Fiscal Year 2022 appropriations, it is crucial that these and all pro-life riders continue to be included in appropriations legislation during the 117th Congress.

The bills also exclude any organization, including child welfare and foster care organizations from receiving funding from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) that do not adhere to the ever-shifting notions of sexual orientation and gender identity ideology. These actions only harm children by eliminating faith-based organizations that could serve and care for them.

The ERLC urges Congress to defend protections against federal funds being used for abortion and to ensure that pro-life spending riders are approved in all spending legislation passed in the 117th Congress. These amendments save lives and protect American consciences. We also urge Congress to remove harmful provisions that would exclude people of faith from serving the most vulnerable. This would be an act of courageous leadership that recognizes our great experiment as a democratic

republic is strongest when we respect one another in the midst of our disagreements. Such an act of across-the-aisle policymaking is desperately needed.

At the end of this letter, you'll find enclosed the ERLC's [complete list of concerns](#) in the appropriations bills.

I look forward to working with you on these and other important issues.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Frederick Brent Leatherwood".

Frederick Brent Leatherwood
President
Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission