



January 16, 2026

The Honorable John Thune
Senate Majority Leader
511 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington D.C., 20510

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

Dear Majority Leader Thune, Minority Leader Schumer, and Members of the United States Senate,

I write to you today as the interim president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC). The ERLC represents the public policy interests of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), the largest Protestant denomination in the United States, with over 46,000 churches and nearly 13 million members.

For millions of Southern Baptists, one issue remains a preeminent priority: the sanctity of life. There have been monumental victories for the cause of life in recent years – the overturn of *Roe v. Wade*, the repeal of harmful federal regulations, and, for the first time ever, federally defunding Planned Parenthood. But now is not the time to step back from the cause of life.

For decades, Southern Baptists have been leaders in the pro-life movement, believing that “We should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death. ([BF&M2000, Art. XV](#)).” Messengers to the SBC annual meetings have long affirmed the value, dignity, and sanctity of human life through numerous resolutions opposing abortion. A 2021 resolution, [On Taxpayer Complicity In Abortion And The Hyde Amendment](#), explicitly outlines Southern Baptist support for across-the-board Hyde protections, **demonstrating just how important that issue is to our 12.9 million members.**

In the case of the much-debated Affordable Care Act subsidies, additional pro-life protections are needed. In light of recent House passage of a three-year renewal of the subsidies — sans Hyde Amendment – we ask that the Senate include pro-life protections in any subsidy policy proposal put forth.

The Hyde Amendment is not an optional guardrail when it comes to the allocation of federal dollars. However, the Affordable Care Act was written in such a way that these subsidies are not subject to this longstanding appropriations provision, which prohibits the taxpayer funding of



abortions. While the ERLC does not profess expertise on the health economics rationale of certain insurance options and does not take a stance on whether certain programs should exist or be extended, we know this: if the ACA tax credits do exist or are renewed, they [must include Hyde protections](#).

This should not be up for debate, and it is impossible to ignore the negative ripple effects of comments indicating that lawmakers should be “flexible” on pro-life protections. We understand the task of reaching a health policy deal that can clear 60 votes is a challenging one, but this is not an issue on which compromise is acceptable. Too many lives are at stake. In the face of such a task, we are praying for clarity of conviction, creativity of strategy, and steadfastness of character.

As we articulated in our recent [letter](#) to President Trump, now is no time to be “flexible” when it comes to the sanctity of human life.

Just one week out from the March for Life – the nation’s largest annual pro-life rally, where tens of thousands will converge on the National Mall to stand for the cause of life – we urge you not to compromise on this issue of utmost importance to Southern Baptists and tens of millions of other pro-life Americans.

Sincerely,

Dr. Gary Hollingsworth
Interim President
Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission
of the Southern Baptist Convention