



Advocacy Update

Sent February 1, 2012

Reform Movement's Response to Komen for the Cure's Defunding of Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA)

To our surprise and distress, WRJ learned on Tuesday evening that Komen for the Cure would no longer fund the breast cancer education and screening programs run by PPFA's affiliates. Cecile Richards, President of PPFA, had opened Women of Reform Judaism's December assembly with a passionate speech on PPFA's health care services for low income women and the need to protect availability of these services. Ambassador Nancy Brinker, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, of Susan G. Komen for the Cure was awarded the Eisendrath Bearer of Light Award at the joint URJ/WRJ plenary the following morning for educating millions of women about breast cancer.

WRJ has had long established policy on women's health issues, including breast cancer. The 1991 resolution, "Women's Health Care," spoke of women's high death rate from breast cancer and the need for screening and treatment, which was followed in the mid-1990's with our Breast Cancer Awareness Campaign. This past spring our board of directors wrote, "Often, the Planned Parenthood clinic is the sole place . . . low income women can go for breast cancer. . . ."

In a letter written to Ambassador Brinker yesterday, Rabbi Marla Feldman, WRJ's Executive Director and Rabbi David Saperstein, Director of the RAC, urged reinstatement of "funding to PPFA for breast cancer screening." The full press release follows below.

Reform Movement Expresses Concern Over Komen's De-Funding of Planned Parenthood

Rabbis Saperstein and Feldman: "We urge you to use your leadership in Komen for the Cure to reinstate funding to PPFA for breast cancer screening, to reconsider the standard by which the organization makes funding decisions, and to continue to fight for the health and lives of women everywhere."

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Washington, D.C., February 1, 2012- This afternoon, Rabbi David Saperstein, Director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, and Rabbi Marla Feldman, Executive Director of the Women of Reform Judaism, sent a letter to Ambassador Nancy Brinker, the founder and CEO of Susan G. Komen for the Cure. The full text of the letter follows:

Dear Ambassador Brinker,

On behalf of the Union for Reform Judaism whose 900 congregations across North America encompass 1.5 million Reform Jews, the Central Conference of American Rabbis, with membership of more than 1800 Reform rabbis, and the Women of Reform Judaism, which represents more than 65,000 women in nearly 500 women's groups in North America and around the world, we write to express our disappointment in Susan G. Komen for the Cure's decision to halt its longstanding partnership with Planned Parenthood Federation of America, thereby withholding funds to fight breast cancer where they

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are most needed.

Komen for the Cure has helped hundreds of thousands of women in the fight against breast cancer, and has educated millions, bringing the once taboo and closeted subject of breast cancer into the public domain. Indeed, the global impact that you and Komen for the Cure have had was precisely why we were so pleased to bestow upon you the Eisendrath Bearer of Light Award at our recent Biennial convention. And this is why we are so deeply disappointed by Komen's decision to cease funding mammograms provided by PPFA in the face of a politically-motivated investigation unrelated to PPFA's breast cancer screenings for vulnerable women.

At the same December Biennial, the Women of Reform Judaism honored PPFA President Cecile Richards and applauded PPFA's work to advance women's health. It is painful for us now to see politics and partisanship interfere with and undermine efforts to support women who lack the resources they need for preventive medical services like mammograms. Each year Planned Parenthood's network of more than 800 clinics nationwide provides nearly 830,000 breast exams. PPFA has stated that, over the past five years, 170,000 of the centers' 4 million breast exams conducted were a direct result of Komen grants. Halting Komen grant money to PPFA is contrary to your organization's mission and interests, directly and unfairly threatening the health and safety of women.

Upon accepting the Eisendrath Bearer of Light Award, you told the story of two women, one Palestinian and one Israeli, marching together to combat breast cancer in the first Race for the Cure in Israel. You explained with admiration that, in the course of the walk, they were able to forget the political climate that divided them and they bonded instead over the common cause of women's health. We now urge Komen to follow their example by rejecting efforts to sow division among women's health advocates and providers and refusing to sacrifice the lives of women on the altar of political ideology.

We understand that this funding decision comes from a new standard employed by Komen for the Cure that defunds organizations under government investigation. While we understand the desire to have an objective policy in place, this particular standard is misguided, threatening more than just grants to PPFA. We believe there are less partisan ways to accomplish your goals. For example, a standard that is linked to investigations carried out by law enforcement is more likely to be free of partisanship. The standard that Komen has established allows Komen's funding decisions to be dictated by the political whims, partisanship and pet issues of individual members of Congress, who persuade their committees to launch an investigation. This new standard may appear to extricate Komen from politicization, yet in reality it leaves the group open to even greater politicization.

We urge you to use your leadership in Komen for the Cure to reinstate funding to PPFA for breast cancer screening, to reconsider the standard by which the organization makes funding decisions, and to continue to fight for the health and lives of women everywhere.

We look forward to your prompt reply.

Sincerely,

Rabbi David Saperstein, Director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism
Rabbi Marla Feldman, Executive Director of the Women of Reform Judaism