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March 17, 2017

The Honorable Ed Hernandez
Chair, Senate Health Committee
State Capitol, Room 2191
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Support SB 743 (Hernandez) – Support

Dear Senator Hernandez:

On behalf of the California Women's Law Center (CWLC), we write in support of Senate Bill 743, the Freedom of Choice in Family Planning Act, which will ensure that Medi-Cal managed care enrollees continue to maintain flexibility in choosing family planning providers in the event that the federal "free choice of provider law" is repealed.

In 1986, Congress passed the "free choice of provider law" allowing Medicaid managed care enrollees to obtain family planning services from any qualified provider that accepts Medicaid patients. This law ensured that women have the ability to choose their preferred family planning provider and thus can receive timely services where they feel most comfortable.

Allowing women to choose their provider is essential because an inability to access family planning services in a timely manner can lead to a litany of negative consequences, including increased risk of unintended pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases and delay of care. SB 743 would ensure that California's long history of implementing the federal free choice of planning provider provision remains intact amidst threats at the national level to repeal this essential provision.

CWLC's mission is to advance the potential of women and girls through transformative litigation, policy advocacy, and education. CWLC recognizes the importance of access to comprehensive reproductive health care and the ability to maintain continuity in family planning services.

For these reasons, the California Women's Law Center strongly supports SB 743.

Sincerely,

Betsy Butler

Executive Director