



March 11, 2021

Dear Senator:

On behalf of YWCA USA, a network of over 200 local associations in 45 states and the District of Columbia, I write today to express our **support for the confirmation of California Attorney General Xavier Becerra to serve as the next Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and urge you to vote yes when this vote comes to the Senate floor.**

As one of the oldest and largest women's organizations in the nation, YWCA USA is on a mission to eliminate racism, empower women, and promote peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all. From our earliest days providing housing and child care to working women in the 1860s, YWCA has been at the forefront of the most pressing social movements for more than 160 years—from voting rights to civil rights, from affordable housing to pay equity, from violence prevention to health care reform. Today, YWCA serves over 2 million women, girls and family members of all ages and backgrounds each year in more than 1,200 communities across the U.S.

The Secretary of Health and Human Service plays a critical leadership role across a range of issues that are central to YWCA's programmatic and policy efforts. Across our network, more than 90% of our YWCAs provide extensive programming in areas that fall within HHS' mission, funding, programs, and oversight responsibilities, including in the areas of child care and early learning; emergency shelter and related assistance for survivors of domestic violence; and health care. Each year, across our vibrant network, we are proud to provide:

- 535,000 women, children, and families with trauma-informed domestic violence and sexual assault programs and services, as the nation's largest network of domestic and sexual violence service providers
- 200,000 children with childcare, Head Start, and Pre-K programs, including programs that specifically integrate trauma-informed practices to meet the needs of homeless children, and children who have witnessed and experienced domestic violence and trauma
- 400,000 women, girls and their families with health screening programs, fitness classes and other programs and services that address health inequities

Informed by our long history of providing domestic and sexual violence services, childcare, and health screenings and related programming, we believe that Attorney General Becerra has the practical experience, commitment to health equity, and understanding of policy to effectively lead the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as it administers the many programs that serve our nation's women, children, and families, especially as our nation continues to grapple with the COVID-19 pandemic. We note in particular that during Attorney General Becerra's time as the Attorney General of

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California, he consistently championed safe, affordable, and equitable access to health care—particularly for women, LGBTQ individuals, people of color, and individuals living in low-income communities—including by working to uphold the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act’s (ACA) nondiscrimination protections, as well as the ACA’s birth control coverage guarantee. He also led a coalition of 13 Attorneys General in submitting comments in opposition to the harmful restrictions of the domestic gag rule, which ultimately forced women’s health care providers like Planned Parenthood out of the Title X program. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Attorney General Becerra continued to push for improved health care access by calling on the federal government to establish a special enrollment period on healthcare.gov to ensure that uninsured individuals could gain access to health insurance, and to remove burdensome regulations and increase access to reproductive telehealth care.

In addition to championing health care access and equity, Attorney General Becerra has worked to expand the services and protections offered to survivors of domestic and sexual violence. As a Member of Congress in 2013, then-Representative Becerra supported and voted to reauthorize and expand the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), which included new provisions extending protections for Native and LGBTQ+ survivors and continued relief for immigrant survivors. And in May 2020, Attorney General Becerra urged Congress to reauthorize the legislation, stating, “There is no place for violence against women anywhere. The reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act is long overdue.”

Attorney General Becerra’s dedication to improving the lives of women, children, and families was also clear from his testimony before the U.S. Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pension (HELP) and the Senate Finance Committees on February 23 and 24, 2021. YWCA was particularly pleased to hear his commitment to growing and supporting the nation’s childcare and early learning infrastructure in order to rebuild our economy, as we have recently focused on the economic “shecession” created by the COVID-19 pandemic and the worsening childcare crisis, which has hastened women’s departure from the workforce (see [America’s Recovery from the 2020 “Shecession”: Building a Female Future of Childcare and Work](#)). When asked about his childcare priorities as the HHS Secretary, Attorney General Becerra stated, “We need to stabilize this field because child care providers have been one of some of the hardest hit in America because of COVID, and the services they provide—especially when they’re done well and safely—are indispensable to the rest of America that needs to get back to work. I hope to work with you if I’m fortunate to be confirmed, to try to move on this because... America realizes how important our child care workers are to our livelihood, to our economy.” The unique barriers that women and other marginalized communities have faced, and continue to face, in the workforce as a result of inadequate childcare systems, particularly during the COVID-19 crisis, underscore the need for a leader at the Department of Health and Human Services to prioritize and expedite action to expand the nation’s childcare system.

In fulfilling its duty to provide advice and consent on presidential nominations, YWCA encourages the Senate to ensure that nominees have professional expertise in the areas for which they are nominated, a deep familiarity with the breadth of programs overseen by the agency they are nominated to lead, and a strong commitment to the agency’s mission. YWCA believes that Attorney General Becerra meets this standard and that he has the experience, knowledge, and commitment to lead the Department. Upon confirmation, we look forward to working with Attorney General Becerra as he leads the Department to comprehensively address the growing childcare crisis facing our nation, to improve survivors’ access to emergency shelter and services, and to ensure that the unique health needs of women, particularly women of color, and other marginalized communities are met.

Accordingly, we urge you to confirm Attorney General Becerra's nomination as Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services. Thank you in advance for your support and consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact Pam Yuen, YWCA USA Director of Government Relations, at pyuen@ywca.org or 202-559-7022 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Catherine Vanebeane Beane".

Catherine V. Beane
Vice President, Public Policy & Advocacy