



June 29, 2021

Senate Committee on Appropriations
The Capitol, Room S-128
Washington, DC 20510

House Committee on Appropriations
The Capitol, Room H-307
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator and Representatives:

We, the undersigned organizations, urge the Appropriations Committees to maintain the District of Columbia FY 2022 Appropriations as introduced in the House as part of the Financial Services and General Government funding bill. The bill respects self-governance of the District of Columbia and maintains local control for the residents of Washington, DC.

Should the bill be amended, we are concerned that the FY'22 spending bill will, yet again, attempt to undermine local decisions made by the people of the District of Columbia and their locally elected leadership. These local laws were enacted to address concerns that are important to the more than 700,000 residents who call Washington, DC home. When Congress attempts to impose legislative "riders," they seek to overturn the work of our locally elected officials and ignore the voices of our neighbors. Such riders could have a grave impact on criminal justice reform, local budget control, gun violence prevention, end-of-life medical decisions, and reproductive freedom. These riders usurp the autonomy granted to the District and our elected mayor and council and overstep the original intent of both the creation of the District and the Home Rule Act.

We understand that some in Congress are still seeking to use the appropriations process to impose policy riders upon the people of the District. The undersigned organizations, collectively representing millions of Americans, advocate on diverse issues and are united in our opposition to the inclusion of any language in the appropriations bill that overrides, limits, or otherwise usurps local government decision-making by the District of Columbia.

We also urge Congress to refrain from taking action that could threaten the District's Local Budget Autonomy Act. The Act allows the District to spend local tax dollars based on the local budget at the beginning of each fiscal year. The DC Superior Court has held that the Autonomy Act is valid, and the DC Council and the Mayor of the District are proceeding with the FY'22 local budget in accordance with the law.

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Previous appropriations bills have included a provision barring the District from using local funds to provide insurance coverage of abortion care for individuals enrolled in the Medicaid program. While the Hyde Amendment currently restricts federal funding for abortion care, states are able to use their own funds to cover abortion care for low-income individuals. DC is the only locality that is restricted by Congress from using its own local funds to ensure equal access to abortion coverage.

Further, previous congressional efforts attempted to overturn, and continue to block, voter initiatives to change marijuana laws that were shown to unfairly target marginalized communities. Congress has gone so far as to bar the District from counting votes on a citizen-led initiative. Most recently, an initiative won the support of over 70 percent of District voters. In the end, the process has created a confusing conflict of laws unique to the District allowing for medicinal and personal use of marijuana but not allowing Washington, DC to tax and regulate its sale. In short, congressional meddling has kept the sale of marijuana unregulated and uncontrolled.

Congressional interference into these local matters is unfair and intolerable. It is a gross misinterpretation of both the United States Constitution and the Home Rule Act.

Right now, Americans are debating these and other issues in communities throughout this country. But, what is not up for debate is who gets to decide these questions. DC's locally elected leadership should decide what is best for the people of the District of Columbia. The Mayor and the Council of the District of Columbia were elected by DC residents to represent our interests. Congress does not impose its views on any other local jurisdiction, and Americans in DC have no vote in the Congress to cast against this ongoing, relentless attack on local democracy. Until such time that the residents of the District achieve full equality through Statehood, we expect Congress to allow District residents to manage their own affairs without interference or meddling.

We urge the Committees to preserve the legislation as introduced and oppose any rollbacks of local autonomy and any other efforts that seek to impose Congress' views upon DC residents.

Sincerely,

DC Vote
ACLU of the District of Columbia
A Little Piece Of Light
African American Ministers In Action
Anacostia Coordinating Council
Center for American Progress
Center for Common Ground

Center for Disability Rights
Clean Elections Texas
Coalition of Labor Union Women, AFL-CIO
CODEPINK
Crushing Colonialism
DC Democratic Caucus for Returning
Citizens

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DC Democratic State Committee
DC Environmental Network
DC Marijuana Justice
DC Statehood Coalition
DC Statehood – Yes We Can!
Death with Dignity National Center
DemCast USA
End Citizens United /
 Let America Vote Action Fund
Fix Democracy First
Food and Water Watch
GW College Democrats
Indivisible Northern Nevada
Jews United for Justice
Justice Policy Institute
The Leadership Conference on Civil and
 Human Rights
League of Women Voters of the US
League of Women Voters of DC
Mid-Ohio Valley Atheists & Humanists
NARAL Pro-Choice America
National Association of Social Workers
National Council of Jewish Women
National Employment Law Project
National Federation of Democratic Women
National Organization for Women
National Partnership for
 Women & Families
National Women's Law Center
Neighbors United for DC Statehood
New Progressive Alliance
NORML
Northridge Indivisible
Our Revolution
People For the American Way
Planned Parenthood
 Federation of America
Pride at Work
Public Citizen
Public Justice Center

RepresentUs New Mexico
SEIU 32BJ
Service Employees International Union
 (SEIU)
Social Security Works
Stand Up America
Stand Up for Democracy in DC - Free DC
Sunrise DC
Voices for Progress
Ward 3 Democrats

CC:
Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton

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