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April 26, 2016

Ms. Wendy Spencer
Chief Executive Officer
Corporation for National and Community Service
250 E Street SW, Suite 4100
Washington, DC 20525

Dear Director Spencer:

I am deeply disturbed by a recent report summarizing an investigation conducted by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) Office of Inspector General, which found numerous violations of the law involving AmeriCorps members serving as doulas to accompany women while they had an abortion. As you know, this is in direct violation of provisions of the Serve America Act.

The National Association of Community Health Centers (NACHC), which received and administered the AmeriCorps grant in question, knew there were violations as early as 2013, did not report them, and provided counsel and training that allowed more AmeriCorps members to provide doula services for women undergoing an abortion. Such a blatant disregard for Federal law is outrageous.

I am also extremely concerned about the actions taken by NACHC to actively discourage staff from reporting potential violations to CNCS and failing to follow CNCS General Counsel guidance, and adhere to member agreements and the law. This is not the first time AmeriCorps members violated Federal law, which is particularly troubling. In 2011, Congressional hearings were held regarding AmeriCorps members engaging in prohibited advocacy for Planned Parenthood. At that time, the CNCS Chief Executive Officer testified that the agency would review its risk assessment tools to improve its prevention and detection of prohibited activities. Clearly more needs to be done in this area.

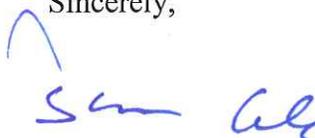
I agree with the Office of Inspector General recommendations for organizational reforms and strengthened monitoring of NACHC. However, I strongly believe that NACHC's repeated violations of the Serve America Act and the failure to abide by the terms and conditions merit an immediate termination and nonrenewal of its AmeriCorps grant.

In this case I appreciate the professionalism CNCS exhibited in investigating the violation of the grant to NACHC. However, I am concerned that there may be a systemic problem. Therefore, I urge you to immediately initiate a rigorous investigation into all grantees and sub-grantees in the AmeriCorps program to determine whether there are other violations and to correct them.

In addition to a thorough investigation, I also expect an exhaustive review of your internal controls for monitoring grantees. In this instance, your General Counsel advised NACHC to follow the statutory language prohibiting abortion-related services, but did not follow up to determine whether the grantee adhered to this guidance. The grantee then proceeded to develop training materials on prohibited activities that clearly contradict your General Counsel's guidance. Regularly evaluating the content of grantee-provided training, to ensure prohibited activities are not performed, should be a basic component of program oversight.

I look forward to hearing of your actions to address these issues as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tom Cole". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "T" and "C".

Tom Cole
Chairman, Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies