

September 24, 2015

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Majority Leader
S-230, U.S. Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Boehner
Speaker of the House of Representatives
H-232, U.S. Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Harry Reid
Senate Minority Leader
S-221, U.S. Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader, House of Representatives
H- 204, U.S. Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Leader McConnell, Speaker Boehner, Leader Reid and Leader Pelosi:

As organizations representing health care professionals and the people they serve across the country, we strongly oppose any effort to prevent Planned Parenthood health centers from participating in federal health programs, including Medicaid and the Title X family planning program. Any proposal to exclude Planned Parenthood from public health programs will severely curtail women's access to essential health care services, including family planning, well-woman exams, breast and cervical cancers screenings, and HIV testing and counseling. At a time when we should be focused on improving the health of all people, it is frustrating to witness ongoing attempts to cut off access to life-saving preventive care.

Planned Parenthood health centers play a crucial role in improving the health and lives of people across the country. In fact, 2.7 million women, men and young people rely on Planned Parenthood for health care every year. For many women, Planned Parenthood is their only source of care—offering basic preventive services that are fundamental to women's health and well-being. Each year, Planned Parenthood health centers provide nearly 400,000 cervical cancer screenings and nearly 500,000 breast exams. Additionally, Planned Parenthood provides over 2.1 million contraceptive services and nearly 4.5 million tests and treatments for sexually transmitted infections, including HIV. These services improve women's health, prevent an estimated 516,000 unintended pregnancies, and decrease infant mortality.

Policies that would exclude Planned Parenthood from public health funding would hurt millions of women and undermine health care access in communities across the country. Approximately 60 percent of Planned Parenthood patients access care through Medicaid and Title X, in addition to those who rely on other essential programs, including maternal and child health programs and Centers for Disease and Prevention (CDC) breast and cervical cancer screening programs. In some states, Planned Parenthood is the only provider participating in Title X, and more than 50 percent of Planned Parenthood health centers are located in a medically underserved or health professional shortage area. Other publicly funded health centers would not be able to compensate for the loss of affordable women's health care at Planned Parenthood.^{1,2} Because federal law already requires health care providers to demonstrate that no federal funds are used for abortion, prohibitions on funding for preventive care at Planned Parenthood health centers will only devastate access to these life-saving services.

¹ Efforts in Texas to restrict participation in the state's family planning program resulted in women losing access to essential preventive services. Surveys of organizations that received family planning funding found 54% fewer clients served than in the previous period. White, Kari, PhD MPH, et. al. The Impact of Reproductive Health Legislation on Family Planning Clinic Services in Texas. *American Journal of Public Health*, Vol. 105, No. 5 (May 2015).

² Rosenbaum, Sara. Planned Parenthood, Community Health Centers, And Women's Health: Getting The Facts Right. *Health Affairs Blog*. September 2, 2015.

Every day, we see the harmful impact that unequal access to health care has on women and communities across the country, and we therefore strongly support policies that improve access to affordable, quality health care. Policies that would deny Planned Parenthood public health funds only serve to cut millions off from critical preventive care, and we strongly oppose any effort to do so. We also recognize this as part of a broader effort to undermine access to safe, legal abortion and curtail access to other reproductive health care by limiting the ability of abortion providers to participate in public health programs. Should you have any questions, please contact ACOG Government Affairs staff, Rachel Gandell at 202-863-2534 or rgandell@acog.org.

Sincerely,

American College of Nurse-Midwives
American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American Medical Women's Association
American Medical Student Association
American Psychological Association
American Public Health Association
American Society for Reproductive Medicine
Association of Reproductive Health Professionals
Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses
Doctors for America
GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBT Equality
National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health
National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health
National Association of Social Workers
National Family Planning & Reproductive Health Association
National Medical Association
National Physicians Alliance
North American Society for Pediatric and Adolescent Gynecology
Nursing Students for Choice
Physicians for Reproductive Health
Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine
Society of Family Planning
Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine
Society for Women's Health Research