

July 24, 2017

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

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

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
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 Ryan, Leader Schumer and Leader Pelosi:

The undersigned leaders of Schools and Programs of Public Health stand united in support of Planned Parenthood and the millions of women, men, and young people who rely on their health centers every year. 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 access to essential health care services, including family planning, well-woman exams, breast and cervical cancers screenings, and HIV testing and counseling. Blocking people from accessing this critical care at Planned Parenthood health centers will have a disproportionate effect on low-income families and people of color – and would cause a public health crisis, especially in areas where access to care is already limited.

Planned Parenthood health centers play a crucial role in improving the health and lives of people across the country. In fact, Planned Parenthood health centers serve 2.5 million patients each year and provides over 4 million sexually transmitted infection (STI) tests and treatment, 360,000 breast exams, 270,000 Pap tests, and birth control for 2 million people. For many women, Planned Parenthood is their only source of care—offering basic preventive services that are fundamental to women’s health and wellbeing. Seventy-five percent of Planned Parenthood’s patients have incomes at or below 150 percent of the federal poverty level, and more than half of Planned Parenthood’s 650 health centers are located in rural or medically underserved areas.

Policies that exclude Planned Parenthood from public health funding would hurt millions of people and prevent women, men, and young people from having timely access to basic preventive health care services. 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. 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 for people already struggling to access basic, preventive health care.

Other providers would not be able to absorb Planned Parenthood’s patients, leaving millions of people without lifesaving care—hurting those already struggling to get by. In 21 percent of counties with a Planned Parenthood health center, Planned Parenthood serves all patients accessing family planning care at a safety net provider in the community. Planned Parenthood health centers are especially critical as Medicaid programs have reported a shortage of ob-gyn providers with only 41 percent of ob-gyn providers in Medicaid managed care networks able to

offer appointments to Medicaid enrollees.<sup>i</sup> More than two-thirds of states report difficulty ensuring provider participation for Medicaid enrollees.<sup>ii</sup>


Blocking Medicaid recipients from Planned Parenthood is not only a public health concern, but the CBO also projects that excluding Planned Parenthood health centers from receiving reimbursement through the Medicaid program would result in a net cost to taxpayers of \$130 million over 10 years because of the increase in unintended pregnancies without the contraceptive care provided by Planned Parenthood.<sup>iii</sup> Other publicly funded health centers would not be able to compensate for the loss of affordable family planning and reproductive health care services provided by Planned Parenthood.<sup>iv,v</sup>

Every day, we see the harmful impact that unequal access to health care has on families and communities, so we advocate to close the gap in health disparities across the country. We therefore strongly support policies that improve access to affordable, quality health care. Policies that would deny Planned Parenthood public health funds cut millions off from critical preventive care, and we strongly oppose any effort to do so. This effort to defund Planned Parenthood is a misguided policy that instead of protecting people's health care, prevents women, men, and young people from making personal health decisions, including whether and when to become parents. It is an attack on the wellbeing and economic security of those who are already most in need. We urge you to stand with us and oppose any attempt to block patients from seeking care at Planned Parenthood health centers.

Sincerely,



Sandro Galea, MD, DrPH, MPH  
Dean, Boston University School of Public Health



Pierre M. Buekens, MD, PhD, MPH  
Dean, Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine



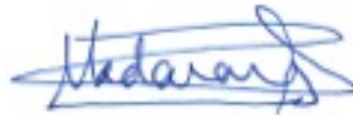
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<sup>i</sup> Letter from Jennifer J. Frost, Principal Research Scientist, Guttmacher Institute, to Lisa Ramirez-Branum, Analyst, Congressional Budget Office (CBO). (2015, August 14). [Online]

<https://www.guttmacher.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/pubs/guttmacher-cbo-memo-2015.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> United States Government Accountability Office. (November 2012) Medicaid: States Made Multiple Program Changes, and Beneficiaries Generally Reported Access Comparable to Private Insurance.

<http://www.gao.gov/assets/650/649788.pdf>

<sup>iii</sup> Letter from Keith Hall, Director of CBO, to Representative Kevin McCarthy, Majority Leader, U.S. House of Representatives. (2015, September 22). [Online] <https://www.cbo.gov/sites/default/files/114th-congress-2015-2016/costestimate/ltrpermanentdefundplannedparenthood.pdf>

<sup>iv</sup> 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).

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