

Testimony
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MN House of Representatives
Health and Human Services Reform Committee
Wednesday, March 30, 2016

Thank you, Madam Chair and members of the committee. My name is Sarah Stoesz and I am the President and CEO of Planned Parenthood MN ND SD and I have led this organization for the past 15 years.

I'm proud to be here today because politicians should not be telling women where they can get their health care.

I'm speaking for multitudes of women who chose Planned Parenthood, the leading provider of high-quality reproductive health care in our region. I encourage you to oppose House File 3374 which would change the way Title X funds have been administered in Minnesota for more than 45 years.

It would also deny Planned Parenthood and other safety net providers access to the state's family planning special projects funds. Planned Parenthood has been a grantee of these funds for 36 years.

One in five women in America has sought care from a Planned Parenthood health clinic. Women trust us, because our rigorous

health standards have been developed with the nation's top medical experts over our 100-year history nationally and our 88 years of providing care in Minnesota.

There has been a great deal of misinformation circulated about Planned Parenthood recently, and I want to be absolutely clear at the outset. All public funding that Planned Parenthood receives is in the form of reimbursement for health care our doctors and clinicians provide for birth control, cancer screenings, testing and treatment for sexually transmitted infections.

No Title X funds or FPSP funds ever pay for abortion services at Planned Parenthood.

In Minnesota, Planned Parenthood cares for nearly 65,000 people annually through a network of 18 clinics: 10 in Greater MN, 5 in suburban communities and 3 in St. Paul/Minneapolis.

55% of our clinics are in rural or medically underserved areas, meaning that people very often have nowhere else to turn for reproductive health care. We are a safety net provider. In 2015, 1 of 2 patients was at or below the federal poverty level and received free care. Another 45% people received care at reduced cost.

Planned Parenthood operates just like Mayo, Allina, Health Partners and all other systems that provide medical care, meaning that we are reimbursed for the care we provide.

And the same is true for Title X, the federal birth control program, which was enacted by a bi-partisan Congress and signed into law by President Nixon in 1970.

Because of our health care mission, we at Planned Parenthood have always been keenly aware of the need for birth control by countless women and families and therefore applied for those funds and were granted authority to implement Title X in Minnesota in 1971.

As a state, Minnesota has invested in family planning for the benefit of public health since 1978; Planned Parenthood has been a recipient of these FPSP funds for more than 35 years.

So, Madam Chair and members of the committee, Planned Parenthood has administered those funds, provided essential health care and been reimbursed for our services to low-income people in need of birth control for nearly 50 years through Title X and 35 years through FPSP

Title X and FPSP funding are only used for preventive health care services like birth control, clinical breast exams, well-woman

exams, pre-conception, pre-natal, cervical cancer screenings and STD testing. People who qualify for Title X or FPSP funding usually have no other funding source for their basic health care.

Blocking access to Planned Parenthood would impact over 45,000 people who receive their health care at 15 of our Planned Parenthood clinics in Minnesota. It would be especially harmful to the 25,000 people who rely directly on Title X and FPSP funding for their care and have no other way to pay for it.

The 15 Minnesota clinics are clinics that only provide birth control and reproductive health services. They do not provide abortion.

In addition to these 15 Planned Parenthood clinics, we partner with 22 additional clinics, primarily in Greater MN that serve 5,000 people each year with federal Title X funding. Our delegate partners are SE Minnesota Community Action, SW Minnesota Opportunity Council, NW Minnesota (Mahube-Otwa) Community Action and Hennepin County Medical Center.

As you can see, working with Title X and the federal and state governments, we have built a solid and effective infrastructure for 45 years, including that we provide extensive support, review, and counsel to our partners regarding the rigorous Title X requirements and best practices.

I know you have received letters from a number of organizations opposing this bill including: ACOG-MN, MN Nurses Association, Face2Face Clinic, Mahube-Otwa, Reproductive Health Alliance Clinics.

Planned Parenthood is a valued partner of Minnesota Department of Health's FPSP program. In the last grant year we reached 28,000 people with education programming that is targeted towards communities with the highest reproductive health needs in our state.

Although is it sometimes claimed that people can just go elsewhere if they are blocked from Planned Parenthood, that's simply not the case, and the network of community clinics here in Minnesota has made clear that they do not have the capacity to provide this care nor do they seek to do so.

Why, after 45 years of providing exemplary health care has this bill been filed today? It is because it is part of a coordinated national effort by those opposed to women's access to abortion and who now seek to influence our state's health care policy. These efforts have failed in Congress and are now being attempted in state after state around the country, sadly now including Minnesota.

These efforts have been justified by deceptively edited and thoroughly discredited videos released by a group that is

dedicated to making abortion illegal in this country. Investigation after investigation has been launched since the videos were released and in all cases it has been shown that Planned Parenthood broke no laws.

The outrageous accusations leveled against Planned Parenthood are offensive and categorically untrue. And in fact the leaders of the organization behind the videos has been indicted and criminally charged in Texas for their illegal actions, and are currently defending themselves against a serious RICO action filed by a number of entities across our country.

So members of the committee, this effort to deny Title X and FPSP funds to Planned Parenthood patients is not based on:

- The success and importance of family planning funding in Minnesota. Over the last 45 years, PP has provided care for 1.6 million people with these funds.**
- It is not based on cost – Currently Title X doesn't cost the state of MN any state tax dollars, but if the Department of Health had to administer the program Minnesota's taxpayers would be paying part of the tab for Title X for the very first time.**

- **It is not based on taxpayer savings. In fact it is well-documented that for every dollar spent on birth control in 2010, more than \$7.00 was saved in public health care expenditures.**
- **It is not based on our ineffectiveness. In fact we know from research that when people can prevent and treat STDs, HPV, HIV, and cancer we all benefit socially and economically.**
- **It is not based on whether the programs are strong, well-run and comply with all laws. These programs are thoroughly audited by an independent external audit firm every single year, and Title X also undergoes a rigorous audit by the federal government every 3 years – they visit clinics, pull files and do an extensive review of the administration of the program.**
- **It is not because the funding is used for abortion – we have not ever - not one penny of TX or FPSP money has ever been spent on abortion.**
- **And, it is certainly not because taxpayers in our state want this bill to pass. In fact, a 2016 statewide poll of Minnesotans showed that 69% of people want PP funding to stay the same or be increased.**

This bill is solely motivated by those that wish to deny women access to abortion.

The tragic thing is that it would not accomplish that unconstitutional goal. In fact, in states such as Texas where PP clinics have been forced to close, hundreds of thousands of women have lost their health care, causing at least 25,000 unintended pregnancies.

I don't want this to happen to people here in our state, and Minnesotans agree.

Largely as a result of access to birth control, women are now nearly half the workforce in America, and more than half of college students. As a result of better sex education and more access to birth control, we are now at a 40-year low for teen pregnancy in America, and PP has been a key part of that result.

In closing, I'd like to tell you about Jodi, a Planned Parenthood patient from St. Cloud who told me PP saved her life. A couple years ago when Jodi went in for her annual exam at our St. Cloud clinic, everything was pretty ordinary, except when the NP found a lump in her neck. Jodi says, "It was a lump I probably never would have noticed."

PP performed a thyroid test and recommended that Jodi see a specialist. She had limited funds and was reluctant to follow-up. But part of our job is to watch over our young patients and our medical staff continued to urge her to be seen.

After an array of tests and biopsies Jodi's medical team concluded that she had follicular thyroid cancer. She had surgery to remove her thyroid and Jodi say she is now on her way to a clean bill of health. And, that "it is because of PP".

Madam Chair, members of the committee, I want to thank you for this opportunity to testify on behalf of Jodi and generations of women who have chosen Planned Parenthood for essential, high-quality health care for nearly 100 years. Thank you.