

Attention: Family Planning

ID: LFG-2018-0024

Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health

Office of Population Affairs

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Hubert H. Humphrey Building, Room 716G

200 Independence Avenue SW

Washington, DC 20201

June 19th, 2018

Re: Docket Number, HHS-OS-2018-0008

Dear Department of Health and Human Services,

The Office of Population Affairs of the United States Department of Health and Human Services, in the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health, proposes to revise its Title X regulations (Title X of the Public Health Service Act) to ensure compliance with, and enhance implementation of, the statutory requirement that none of the funds appropriated for Title X may be used in programs where abortion is a method of family planning and related statutory requirements. In addition, the Office of Population Affairs proposes amendments to the Title X regulations that would, among other things, clarify grantee responsibilities to provide a broad range of family planning methods; to require documented compliance with State and local laws requiring notification or the reporting of child abuse, child molestation, sexual abuse, rape, incest, intimate partner violence, and human trafficking; to provide free or low cost access to family planning services for those women who are unable to obtain employer-sponsored insurance coverage for certain contraceptive services due to their employers' religious beliefs or moral convictions; to provide for the appropriate expenditure of federal Title X funds on family planning services, rather than on lobbying or related activities; and to appropriately encourage family participation in family planning decisions, all as required by Federal law.

It should be noted that Federal Title X funding helps ensure that every person, regardless of where they live, how much money they make, their background, or whether or not they have health insurance, do have access to basic, preventive reproductive health care. More than four million people rely on affordable birth control and reproductive health care services that are funded by Title X. Many of these people don't even know Title X exists, but without it they wouldn't be able to access this essential care. The basic primary and preventive health care services provided by Title X include: Wellness exams, lifesaving cervical and breast cancer screenings, birth control, contraception education, testing and treatment for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and HIV testing. In 2016 alone, health centers used Title X funding to provide nearly seven hundred thousand (700,000) Pap tests, more than four million STD tests (including HIV tests), and nearly one million women with breast exams.

In the United States, individuals rely on Title X in every state at nearly four thousand (4,000) Title X funded health centers across the country. For example, Planned Parenthood plays a crucial role in providing Title X funding care. Even though it is true that Planned Parenthood health centers make up just 13 percent of Title X centers, they serve 41 percent of all Title X patients. That means that in many

cases, preventing patients from getting care at Planned Parenthood will mean people go without care. But despite the good work that Planned Parenthood provides to people, some political figures are bent on trying to stop Planned Parenthood.

Title X funded services do mostly serve people with low incomes, who couldn't otherwise afford health care on their own. Seventy-eight (78) percent of Title X patients have incomes below one hundred and fifty (150) percent of the federal poverty level. The Title X program fights health care inequity by serving populations that have historically faced significant barriers to care, including people of color. About 21 percent of Title X patients identify as Black or African American and 32 percent identify as Hispanic or Latino. Title X also helps people who are uninsured. Although the Affordable Care Act helped more people get insured than ever before, some people with low and middle incomes remain uninsured and have a greater need for publicly funded birth control and reproductive health care services.

So, in conclusion, I am in opposition to this agenda item in which is an attempt to undermine individuals access to high-quality and affordable birth control and reproductive health services, including removing its focus on providing birth control and reproductive health care. I do not believe that it is in the best interest of the people, for the United States Department of Health and Human Services, to push people toward abstinence programs or fertility awareness methods (like the "rhythm method" or "calendar method") instead of more effective forms of birth control like the pill, the birth control shot, or IUDs or to work to block patients from visiting Planned Parenthood health centers for Title X funding care, due to politics and political influence.


Respectfully,

Isaiah X. Smith¹

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