

**Submitted Testimony of Janette Walker, Human Resources Manager
Planned Parenthood of Connecticut, Inc.
Concerning SB 843 and the Governor's Budget Recommendations with Respect to the
Elimination of the Medical Interpretation program under Medicaid
March 3, 2009**

Senator Doyle, Representative Walker, and members of the Human Services Committee, thank you for the opportunity to add the voice of Planned Parenthood of Connecticut to those urging you to preserve foreign language interpreter services under the Medicaid program. I am Janette Walker, Human Resources Manager for Planned Parenthood of Connecticut, which is the largest provider of reproductive health care in the state, serving over 62,000 patients annually at 18 health centers.

Section 40 of the Governor's budget eliminates Medicaid reimbursement for medical interpretation, which brings our comments here today. As a Medicaid provider whose patient population has become increasingly diverse, Planned Parenthood offers culturally and linguistically appropriate care to our patients who speak little or no English. We rely on bilingual staff in several of our busiest, most diverse centers, (in Bridgeport, Meriden, Waterbury, Hartford, New London) to offer translation between caregiver and patient, in addition to their other job duties. At about 6000 patient visits to PPC each year, some level of medical interpretation is necessary or desirable.

As providers of reproductive and sexual health care, we know that the isolation a woman who does not speak English may feel, coupled with possible cultural hesitation to discuss sexual and reproductive health matters, can result in delayed care that is costlier and more complex. Medical interpretation services have become every bit as necessary as other aspects of the care we offer, which is why we join others in asking that the Medicaid program reimburse providers for foreign language interpretation as a covered service. This service is costly to provide and is a particular challenge with the additional pressures of the current economy.

Planned Parenthood provides our most fluent bilingual staff members with the opportunity to become certified as medical interpreters. With this skill, these staff members are now more valuable to our organization, better serve our mission, and have additional value on the job market as well.

Planned Parenthood is also extremely concerned about the elimination of all Medicaid and HUSKY health coverage (except for emergency care) for non-citizens legally present in the U.S. for less than 5 years. Reproductive health care and family planning are vital to preventing unintended pregnancy in a vulnerable population. We know that for every \$1 the state invests in family planning, \$4 is saved on state supported pregnancy-related services. This would be an important moment, with the state budget in crisis, to insure that ALL women in need have access to health care, rather than presenting themselves at the provider's door in a time of emergency.

Please restore the medical interpretation funds and coverage for legal non-citizens in the final state budget. Thank you.