

Testimony by Marian K. Blawie, RN, CLC
Concerning Senate Bill 274
An Act Concerning Funding for Planned Parenthood and Other Family Planning Clinics

Human Services Committee
State Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT
March 5, 2020

Hello members of the Human Services Committee:

My name is Marian Blawie. I am a Registered Nurse and currently a graduate student at Yale School of Nursing, where I will graduate next year as a nurse practitioner, a Certified Nurse Midwife. I am deeply devoted to women's healthcare.

I am here to express my strong opposition to SB 274, a bill which would allocate millions of scarce Connecticut taxpayer dollars to Planned Parenthood of Southern New England (PPSNE).

Last year, PPSNE voluntarily declined to accept federal Title X funds. However, in the past eight months, it has waged an impressive and disingenuous PR campaign to spin its willful refusal to accept those funds as having been "forced" out of the program instead.

As a nurse and midwifery student, a portion of my clinical work has been in a Title X-funded clinic in the city of New Haven. I have also taken the time to read the Title X regulations themselves. Therefore, I can say with confidence that it is misleading and dishonest to characterize Title X as containing a "gag rule." It is misleading and dishonest to characterize PPSNE's decision as anything other than a willful rejection of funding that would directly benefit low-income people.

PPSNE has made clear that it is more committed to its current business model, which prioritizes elective abortion, than it is to providing reproductive healthcare services. We can say with confidence that the proposed funds will be used for abortions. This is especially troubling given the fact that Connecticut taxpayers are already paying for 3 out of 4 abortions performed in this state. As you are well aware, while this is morally repugnant to myself and to thousands of your other constituents, this is not about stopping abortions; this is about dropping the charade that PPSNE needs even more taxpayer funding to carry them out.

According to its own disclosures, the local Planned Parenthood affiliate is already quite financially secure. In 2017-2018, PPSNE enjoyed a \$10 million net operating surplus. It also had over \$12 million in its own endowment. If more money is truly needed, PPSNE could comply with Title X regulations, or else leverage the brand recognition and extensive fundraising network at its fingertips—strong financial resources that are the envy of most nonprofits. This is deep-pocketed political advocacy masquerading as healthcare.

The state of Connecticut faces *billion-dollar* deficits for the next several years, according to a report released by the Office of Fiscal Analysis. There is an old saying that a budget is the skeleton of government, stripped of all ideology and rhetoric. What exactly are we spending money on? With our state drowning in red ink and so many crucial needs still unmet, this proposal would constitute a flagrant misuse of scarce resources. For example, this legislature has not allocated adequate funds to address maternal mortality or to promote healthy pregnancy and birth in Connecticut, but somehow in this time of deep deficits, it can find millions of public funds to give to this already-profitable operation? As a nurse and soon-to-be Midwife, I am appalled at the backwards priorities on display. I respectfully urge all of you to vote NO on SB 274. Thank you.

Respectfully,

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