

Dear Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie and distinguished members of the Human Services Committee:

My name is Jelmarie Maldonado, also known as Juno. I am from Manchester and I am a former employee of Planned Parenthood Southern New England. I am testifying in support of raised S.B. 274 *An Act Concerning Increased Funding To Planned Parenthood And Other Family Planning Clinics* which will provide critical funding for continued access to preventive reproductive health care for the people of Connecticut who already struggle to get the care they need.

I moved to Connecticut six years ago and in that time I've grown to love this state, specifically because of state lawmakers who arduously fight to make this a state that is equitable and just to all. Connecticut has become the anti-thesis of Trumpian-like policy that has stripped people away from their health care, rights, and livelihoods. Connecticut has an opportunity to continue on that grand tradition and fund family clinics so they can continue to provide affordable and accessible health care.

When I worked at PPSNE, I witnessed countless times how important access to affordable health care was to the community. When I went to community events, wearing proudly my Planned Parenthood pink shirt, people would come up to me, hug me and, in some cases crying, thank me on behalf of an organization that saved their lives. It was not hyperbole. For many of Planned Parenthood's patients, Planned Parenthood was the **only** health care they could afford. It made me proud to work and serve in Planned Parenthood because I knew my work made a difference in people's lives every day.

That's why it was so devastating when Planned Parenthood and other family clinics were forced out of Title X — simply because they refused to lie to their patients. Title X is the only federal program dedicated to affordable family planning and preventive health care including wellness exams, cervical and breast cancer screenings, birth control, testing and treatment for sexually transmitted diseases and HIV. Without it, over 41,000 Title X patients at 11 Planned Parenthood health centers in Connecticut will lose their health care. 54% of which are patients that identify as people of color — 23% are Black or African-American and 23% are Latino/a/x.

The Title X program was created to fight health care inequity by serving populations that have historically faced significant barriers to care, including people of color, people of low income, LGBTQ+ people, immigrants and people living in rural areas. The Trump-Pence Administration's domestic "Gag Rule" on Title X providers was created to purposely that prohibit health care providers like PPSNE from providing high quality, medically accurate care to patients. Health care is a human right and it should never be conditional to, frankly, what any good doctor would consider a violation of their Hippocratic oath.

Thank you to Governor Lamont and elected leaders for supporting family planning funding in the budget and continuing our state's strong commitment to protecting and improving women's health care. I strongly support raised S.B. 274 and urge the committee and legislature to vote favorably to support funding for family planning providers. Your support means the world to this newly-minted Connecticuter and it could save and drastically improve the wellbeing of many of your constituents. Please, vote yes on S.B. 274.

Thank you for your time,

Jelmarie Maldonado
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