

March 5, 2020

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

As an obstetrician-gynecologist caring for women in Connecticut, I write in support of SB 274, *An Act Concerning Increased Funding To Planned Parenthood And Other Family Planning Clinics*. With this legislation, Connecticut has a chance to right a wrong - by protecting our citizens who would be harmed by the Trump Administration's unethical Title X rule.

This rule forbids physicians and other healthcare providers at centers with Title X funding from counseling patients with unexpected or unhealthy pregnancies about the full range of reproductive options, including abortion. All people deserve to know their options when talking with their doctor, but this rule – known as the domestic gag rule – forbids such comprehensive counseling by doctors. The Trump Administration's Title X rule is an assault on the patient-physician relationship and on the ethical practice of medicine that centers patients' needs and values. Because it is unethical, Planned Parenthood of Southern New England and other family planning clinics in Connecticut left the Title X program.

Title X is the only federal program that supports access to reproductive health care - such as contraception and screening for sexually transmitted infections and cervical cancer - for anyone who needs it regardless of their ability to pay. It is a critical part of our nation's public health safety net and of ensuring health justice. By attaching the poison pill of mandated unethical counseling to the funding, the Trump Administration is shredding that safety net. We in Connecticut can and must protect our safety net by enacting SB 274.

In our state, Planned Parenthood has been a part of Title X since the program started 50 years ago, caring for over 41,000 people at Title X visits each year – until it was forced out last summer. A critical part of our state's health safety net, our local Planned Parenthood cares for communities that often struggle to access care such as those in rural areas, people of color, those of lower income, immigrants and LGBTQ+ people. Even with the loss of Title X funding, Planned Parenthood in Connecticut has continued to see all patients who need their care, but this is not sustainable. With this legislation, our state can put patients first and ensure access to this fundamental care for the long term.

My north star as a physician is patient access to excellent care and I am proud to work at Planned Parenthood where I can live out this value. And I am proud to live in Connecticut where we stand up for doing what's right for the health of our communities. I thank Governor Lamont and our state's elected leaders for supporting family planning funding and for reaffirming that Connecticut cares for and protects the people who live here.

Respectfully submitted,



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