

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

Hello to you all. My name is Alicia di Leo. I've lived in Ellington CT for over 20 years. I am a wife of 25 years, mother to three daughters, the chairperson of my Church's parishioner board, and I serve on the Board of Directors of my local community theatre. I consider myself a person who is pro-family; pro-faith; and deeply pro-choice. As such I am here to urge you to support SB 274 and provide crucial funding to family planning centers such as Planned Parenthood, who have lost funds in the face of the Trump-Pence Gag Rule.

I'd like to begin by asking the gentlemen on this panel when the last time was they were concerned that a crucial part of their healthcare coverage would be determined by the outcome of a national or state election? Have you ever once had to worry about that? It's not a fun feeling, to know that if Candidate A wins you can probably access the healthcare you need but if Candidate B wins, well then, all bets are off. That's what women in this country face in nearly every election now, and I can tell you for nuthin', we're sick to death of it. We're sick to death of our bodies being on the ballot every four years. I'm sick to death of my daughter's bodies being a political football that gets tossed about in a cynical ploy for votes.

Planned Parenthood provides life-saving services to populations that are historically underserved: they provide cervical and breast cancer screenings, testing and treatment for sexually transmitted diseases and HIV, legally protected and medically safe abortions for those women who choose not to continue a pregnancy, as well as dispensing the high quality birth control that prevents a crisis pregnancy in the first place. Please remember that since its inception Planned Parenthood's participation in the Title X program has received bipartisan support; it is only recently that it has become politically charged. Funding Planned Parenthood and other family planning clinics in our state will at the very least insulate CT women from the shifting political winds that have indeed weaponized our reproductive healthcare.

Planned Parenthood was there for me when I was a recent college graduate, underemployed and uninsured. It was also there for me as a woman in my late thirties, whose family of three children was complete. The midwife who delivered my last two children at a Catholic hospital told me she couldn't provide me with the long-term birth control my husband and I desired. She said, "I'll have to refer you over to our good friends at Planned Parenthood. They'll take good care of you." I will stand with Planned Parenthood for the rest of my life because they stood with me. I implore you to be there for this organization today, so that it can continue to serve those who desperately need its services.

The grotesque irony of the Title X Gag Rule is that it hamstring the very organizations whose mission it is to prevent crisis pregnancies in the first place.

I'm grateful to live in a state that has a strong commitment to reproductive freedom. Please support SB 274. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today about this.

Alicia di Leo
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