

Committee on Energy and Commerce
Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Chairman Frank Pallone, Jr.

Protecting Title X and Safeguarding Quality Family Planning Care

June 19, 2019

Today's hearing is the latest step in this Committee's ongoing work to hold the Trump Administration accountable for the dramatic changes it has proposed to our nation's Title X family planning program. The Administration's proposal not only threatens the purpose of Title X, but the health of every low-income woman and family that the program is intended to serve.

Title X is a competitive grant program that allows the providers who are best equipped to meet the unique health needs of a community to participate in the program. This is how the program was designed, and is a hallmark for why the program has been successful.

Take my home state for example, the New Jersey Family Planning League operates a network of Title X health centers serving nearly 100,000 patients a year, including one site in my district, Planned Parenthood of Northern, Central and Southern New Jersey.

Yet, this Administration is promoting harmful changes to the Title X program because this diverse and community driven network of health centers includes abortion providers, namely Planned Parenthood, who offer abortion services with non-Title X and non-federal funds. Prior to the most recent round of project awards, 40 percent of all of women served by Title X-funded health centers were served at Planned Parenthood sites.

By targeting entities that provide comprehensive reproductive health care services, the Administration's Title X Gag Rule stands to destroy the intent of the Title X program—to serve those with limited means to access high-quality family planning and related health care. By denying funding to these providers, the Trump Administration is making it harder for low-income women and families to get the health information and care they need.

In fact, in his ruling preventing the Administration from implementing its Title X rule, Judge McShane with the U.S. District Court of Oregon stated: [and I'm quoting] "The Final Rule would create a class of women who are barred from receiving care consistent with accepted and established professional medical standards."

Judge McShane went on to say that if implemented, the final rule will [and I'm quoting again]"...result in less contraceptive services, more unintended pregnancies, less early breast cancer detection, less screening for cervical cancer, less HIV screening, and less testing for sexually transmitted disease. HHS's response to these negative health outcomes is one of silence and indifference."

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That's damning, and unfortunately, indifference is far too common with this Administration. Under President Trump and Secretary Azar's leadership, HHS has repeatedly promoted policies, practices, and proposals intent on sabotaging health care in our nation and ripping health care away from millions of Americans.

This Administration is comfortable putting its divisive ideology over the needs of people and families.

This Committee has repeatedly sought answers on the Administration's ongoing threats to the Title X program, and to date the responses have been woefully inadequate. From the early termination of Title X projects, to funding announcements that undermined the value of quality family planning providers, to the new rule that would gag providers and limit patients' access to information and care, this Administration has been intent on replacing providers' and patients' judgement with their own.

For nearly 50 years, when you walked in the door of a Title X health center, you could trust that every staff member would treat you with dignity and respect, and that you would receive complete and accurate medical information. The Trump Administration's actions undermine that long-standing commitment, sabotaging not just the Title X program and its patients, but access to high-quality family planning and related health care across the country.

As long as the Trump Administration continues its efforts to undermine health care for millions of Americans, this Committee will continue to hold it accountable.

Thank you.