

Yes, Evers gave COVID relief money to Planned Parenthood — but it's not being used to fund abortions

If Your Time is short

- Democratic Gov. Tony Evers did give Planned Parenthood in Wisconsin \$2.4 million in COVID relief money. Of that, \$1.4 million was split between individual clinics and about \$1 million was given to the broader statewide organization.
- But those funds aren't being used to fund abortions. Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin's three clinics that do provide abortion services — one in Madison, one in Milwaukee and one in Sheboygan — weren't included on the list of individual clinic grants.
- The grant to Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin is aimed at reducing health inequities that have been exacerbated by the pandemic, not to pay for abortions, a leader within the organization said.

See the sources for this fact-check

There are lots of things Wisconsin Gov. Tony Evers and former Lt. Gov. Rebecca Kleefisch, who's running to unseat Evers this fall, don't agree on.

One big one: How to treat Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin, the state's [largest reproductive health care provider](#).

Kleefisch, a Republican who opposes abortion, supported legislation under former Gov. Scott Walker that [cut funding for Planned Parenthood](#) in 2016. She's touted that on the campaign trail as recently as [last month](#).

Evers, a Democrat who backs abortion rights, [campaigned on restoring funding to the organization](#), but has been stifled in his attempts to do so by the Republican-controlled Legislature.

He did, however, allocate a small portion of federal COVID-19 relief dollars to Planned Parenthood clinics throughout the state, which Kleefisch latched onto in a March 9, 2022 campaign email.

"Tony Evers was caught giving \$2.4 MILLION of our state's federal COVID relief funds in grants to Planned Parenthood affiliates throughout Wisconsin to bail them out and fund abortions," the email reads.

A quick search of the state Department of Administration's list of grantees shows those funds were indeed awarded to Planned Parenthood clinics.

But Kleefisch's purported reason why Evers allocated the money is where her argument goes awry.

Let's take a look.

Evers did send \$2.4 million in COVID relief dollars to Planned Parenthood

When asked for evidence to back up the claim, Kleefisch's communications director Alec Zimmerman sent two documents from the Department of Administration that list grant awards to Planned Parenthood.

The first grants were among those distributed to nonprofit organizations that provided "critical services to individuals in the areas of health care, housing and shelter, adult education" and other services, according to a [Nov. 3, 2020 news release](#) from Evers' office announcing the grant program.

Evers directed \$10 million of the state's money from the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act toward the grant program.

Twenty-one Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin clinic locations [received grants](#) that added up to \$1.4 million.

Those included Appleton, Blair, Delavan, Eau Claire, Green Bay, Kenosha, La Crosse, Manitowoc, Oshkosh, Portage, Racine, Sparta, Waukesha, West Allis, West Bend and Wisconsin Rapids, as well as the Madison South clinic and Milwaukee's Capitol, Mitchell Street, Northwest and Wisconsin Avenue locations.

Evers also awarded a [\\$1 million-dollar grant](#) to Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin on Feb. 8, 2022 as part of his Equitable Grant Recovery Program, aimed at supporting organizations that work to eliminate disparities in health, child development, education and

other areas. A [grant announcement](#) from the Department of Administration said up to \$82 million in grants may be given for those purposes.

This grant program, too, is using COVID relief dollars — this time from the federal American Rescue Plan Act.

So Kleefisch is right that Evers sent \$2.4 million in grant money to Planned Parenthood in Wisconsin — though we'll note he wasn't "caught" doing it. Recipients were posted on a government web site.
Giving money to Planned Parenthood doesn't always mean funding abortions

Her claim veers off track in the second half: Did Evers give the money to Planned Parenthood specifically to "bail them out and fund abortions?"

"The 'bail out' language was obviously general but it's worth pointing out that the Walker/Kleefisch Administration stripped Planned Parenthood of its state funding so you have to wonder if the move to give them grants was intentional," Zimmerman wrote in an email.

That's conjecture, not evidence. And, as noted, Planned Parenthood is a major provider of health-care services.

Abortion services make up a small share of the organization's overall services — 3% in 2019, according to the latest [annual national report](#). And in Wisconsin, [only three clinics can provide them](#).

That's the Madison East location, Milwaukee's Water Street Health Center and the Sheboygan clinic.

None of those clinics got money from the nonprofit grant program.

Mike Murray, vice president of public affairs for Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin, said in an email that neither pot of funding would be used to fund abortion services as Kleefisch claimed.

All CARES Act money is explicitly prohibited from being used for abortions [under the Hyde Amendment](#), which prevents federal dollars from being used for that purpose in most cases. The ARPA funds aren't restricted by Hyde, but in this case still are not being directed toward abortions.

The CARES Act dollars went toward family planning services, treatment and testing for sexually transmitted infections and cancer screenings, Murray said. The ARPA funding will support "investments to reduce health inequities that have been exacerbated by the pandemic."

Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin does, of course, provide abortion services.

But Kleefisch didn't say Evers gave money to an organization that performs those services. She said he gave them the money specifically to fund abortions.

That's off the mark.
Our ruling

Kleefisch claimed Evers gave Planned Parenthood affiliates in Wisconsin \$2.4 million in federal COVID relief money "to bail them out and fund abortions."

Evers did give them grants funds, but they're not being used to pay for abortions.

Our definition of Mostly False is a statement that contains an element of truth but ignores critical facts that would give a different impression.

That fits here.