

Rep. Engel
Opening Statement
September 17, 2015

E&C Health Subcommittee hearing, “Protecting Infants: Ending Taxpayer Funding for Abortion Providers Who Violate the Law”

Witnesses:

Charmaine Yoest, Ph.D.
President
Americans United for Life

Casey Mattox
Senior Counsel
Alliance Defending Freedom

Judy Waxman
Attorney at Law
Adjunct Professor
Women’s Health Law Expert

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I think it is important that we recognize why today’s hearing is taking place. Despite its incendiary title, the goal of this hearing is not to “protect” anyone. If it were, we would not be debating the merits of an organization that provides life-saving care to more than 2 million Americans, most of whom have nowhere else to turn.

We are here because the Majority has again chosen to spend precious legislative days reigniting the same tired battles of years past, and bringing our government to the brink of a shutdown, all for the purpose of rolling back women’s ability to control their own health and bodies.

This time, their attacks are focused on Planned Parenthood – an organization that, despite contrived and unsubstantiated allegations to the contrary, has not violated any state or federal laws, but has provided breast exams, cervical cancer screenings, HIV tests, and other invaluable services to our country’s poorest and most underserved women and men.

Some have argued that other providers, such as community health centers, could fill the void that would be created if Planned Parenthood clinics closed their doors and offer these patients the same level of care.

More than half of Planned Parenthood health centers are located in rural areas, medically underserved areas, or health professional shortage areas. My district contains such “shortage areas,” where access to health care is *already* too limited.

It is not difficult to understand, then, why the American Public Health Association called the notion that community health centers could simply take on all of the patients who rely on Planned Parenthood “ludicrous.”

It is also not difficult to imagine how unlikely it will be that women and men in these underserved areas would be able to access life-saving breast cancer screenings, cervical cancer screenings, STI tests and HIV tests in a timely manner if Planned Parenthood centers were to disappear.

Make no mistake: the bills under consideration today will do nothing to “protect” our constituents. On the contrary, they will put the health of our country’s most vulnerable women and men in jeopardy.