

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Planned Parenthood Advocates Condemns Discrimination  
Against Patients in Budget Bills**

*Two budget bills attempt to “defund” Planned Parenthood and deny patients’ access to vital preventive care like birth control, cancer screenings, and STI testing*

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. – Planned Parenthood Advocates condemns the Missouri Legislature’s passage of two bills that aim to “defund” Planned Parenthood. “Defunding” is shorthand for discriminating against patients who rely on publicly funded health care programs by blocking their access to birth control, cancer screenings, and sexually transmitted infection (STI) testing at Planned Parenthood health centers.

M'Evie Mead, director of policy and organizing for Planned Parenthood Advocates in Missouri, issued the following statement:

*“For the second year running, anti-women’s health lawmakers are discriminating against patients who rely on publicly funded health care programs. Planned Parenthood has continued to serve these patients, but this is not sustainable. Missouri is in the midst of a syphilis outbreak, but instead of working to expand access to health care, lawmakers spent their time helping to spread infections by blocking patients from getting preventive care at Planned Parenthood health centers.*

*“Thousands of Missourians are now depending on Gov. Parson to protect their access to basic, preventive health care by vetoing these discriminatory budget provisions.”*

The health care safety-net is already strained: [A report](#) has found that besides Planned Parenthood, only 7% of more than 600 safety-net health centers offer a full range of birth control options and have evening or weekend hours. With a [resurgence of syphilis](#), Missouri is facing a sexually transmitted infection (STI) public health crisis, yet the Missouri Legislature is blocking patients from the very testing and treatment services that keep people healthy and prevent the spread of STIs.

Governor Parson's budget did not include "defund" language in HBs 10 and 11. The House Appropriations Committee broke with the governor's recommendations, and the Senate acquiesced. In addition to keeping patients from accessing preventive care like birth control, cancer screenings and STI testing and treatment, "defunding" Planned Parenthood could jeopardize Missouri's entire federal Medicaid allotment because it violates federal law protecting Medicaid patients' right to choose any willing provider of family planning services.

Missourians are now counting on Gov. Parson to veto these provisions, demand the legislature stop discriminating against patients, and protect access to health care.

*ICYMI: Coverage of the syphilis outbreak in Missouri:*

- Joplin Globe: [Public health officials fight sudden syphilis outbreak in Joplin area](#)
- Kaiser Health News in the Daily Beast: [Syphilis is spreading across rural America](#)
- Four States Homepage: [Cases of syphilis are up 200% in Missouri, from 2015-2018](#)
- Riverfront Times: [Syphilis is now ravaging rural Missouri, report says](#)

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*Planned Parenthood Advocates in Missouri works to protect and expand sexual and reproductive rights and health for all Missourians. It is a joint project of Planned Parenthood Great Plains Votes and Advocates of Planned Parenthood of the St. Louis Region and Southwest Missouri, the political and advocacy arms of both Planned Parenthood affiliates in Missouri.*