



S4103/A5802: Protect Access to Birth Control, Cancer Screenings, and STI Testing and Treatment in New Jersey

On August 19, Planned Parenthood affiliates in New Jersey were forced out of the federal Title X program due to the enforcement of the Trump-Pence administration's unethical "gag rule." The gag rule is unethical and dangerous to the health of patients in New Jersey and across the country, as it is intended to prevent patients from receiving full information about all of their health care options.¹ Seventy percent of Title X patients in New Jersey receive care at a Planned Parenthood health center – meaning those tens of thousands of patients now don't have federal funding to help them access birth control, cancer screenings, and STI testing and treatment.

Background on Title X

Title X (*ten*) is the nation's program for affordable birth control and reproductive health care, including services such as testing and treatment for sexually transmitted diseases, cancer screenings, and other essential services. The program is meant to ensure that access to care does not depend on who you are or your income. Planned Parenthood has been the largest provider in the Title X program, providing services to 40 percent of all Title X patients nationally. **Here in New Jersey, more than 70 percent of the 100,000 patients served by Title X received care at a Planned Parenthood health center.**² The loss of Title X funding will disproportionately affect women of color and people struggling to make ends meet.³

S4103/A5802 will protect patients in New Jersey by providing funding for lifesaving family planning services at Planned Parenthood and other providers who were forced out of Title X due to the gag rule.⁴ The bills provide for \$9.5 million in funding to help protect patients' access to care. These bills have been introduced into the Senate and Assembly and will support Planned Parenthood's patients who need these services.

Without this state support, providers like Planned Parenthood cannot continue to offer the same level of services as we are currently providing. In states such as Ohio, Planned Parenthood providers have already been forced to close health centers due to the loss of Title X funding. We have also seen the impact of funding cuts to family planning providers right here in New Jersey - when funding was eliminated from the state budget during the previous administration, STD rates skyrocketed in the state.⁵ **It is vitally important that the NJ Senate and Assembly pass this funding bill as soon as possible to keep our services available to patients in NJ and to keep our doors open.**

For more information, contact Kaitlyn Wojtowicz, Vice President of Public Affairs with Planned Parenthood Action Fund of New Jersey, at Kaitlyn.Wojtowicz@ppggnj.org.

¹ <https://www.plannedparenthoodaction.org/planned-parenthood-action-fund-new-jersey-inc/newsroom/planned-parenthood-nj-withdrawing-from-title-x>
² https://www.guttmacher.org/sites/default/files/report_downloads/publicly_funded_contraceptive_services_2015_tables_1-7.pdf
³ <https://www.hhs.gov/opa/sites/default/files/title-x-fpar-2017-national-summary.pdf>
⁴ As of September 20, 2019, Planned Parenthood is the only provider in New Jersey who has announced their refusal to comply with the gag rule and as a result have been forced out of the program. This legislation ensures funding is available if other providers decide to also leave the program at a later date.
⁵ <http://ppactionnj.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Planned-Parenthood-Action-Fund-of-NJ-Access-at-Risk-2017.pdf>

Health Care Providers Oppose the Gag Rule

The medical community has voiced serious concerns about the ethics and harm posed by the gag rule. Below is a round-up of opposition to the gag rule from prominent provider and medical organizations.

The **American Medical Association (AMA)** released a statement strongly objecting to the rule: “High-quality medical care relies on honest, unfiltered conversations between patients and their physicians. Gag orders that restrict the ability of physicians to explain all options to their patients and refer them—whatever their health care needs—compromise this relationship and force physicians and nurses to withhold information that their patients need to make decisions about their care.”

The **American Nurses Association (ANA)** condemned the gag rule: “This proposal is a major setback to progress made to ensure individuals have access to the services and care that they seek. As a result, millions of Americans stand to lose basic, preventive reproductive health care, such as birth control, cancer screenings, STI testing and treatment, and well-woman exams...The Code of Ethics for Nurses outlines that the nurse’s primary commitment is to the patient, whether an individual, family, group, community, or population. This proposed rule interferes with that relationship and violates basic ethics of the profession.”

The **American College of Physicians (ACP)** asked the Trump-Pence administration to withdraw the rule: “The administration’s proposed policy changes are outdated and would turn back the clock on women’s health care, patient-centered care, and informed shared decision-making instead of propelling it forward. ACP calls on the administration to focus on policies that promote accessible health care for all Americans, including those protected by Title X, and to withdraw its proposal to restrict federal funding from clinics where physicians and other health care professionals provide legally permitted health care services to patients in need.”

The **American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM), the American College of Physicians (ACP), the Association for Physician Assistants in Obstetrics and Gynecology (APAOG), the National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women’s Health (NPWH), Nurses for Sexual and Reproductive Health (NSRH), and the Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine (SAHM)** all released a joint statement opposing the rule: “Politicians have no role in picking and choosing among qualified providers. Title X is the only federal program exclusively dedicated to providing low-income and adolescent patients with access to essential family planning and preventive health services and information. Under this proposed rule, more than 40 percent of Title X patients are at risk of losing access to critical primary and preventive care services. Further, patients served by Title X will lose access to meaningful health information. The proposed rule dangerously intrudes on the patient-provider relationship.”

The **American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), and American College of Physicians (ACP)** released Joint Principles for Protecting the Patient-Physician Relationship, directly addressing the impacts of a national gag rule: “Patients expect medically accurate, comprehensive information from their physicians; this dialogue is critical to ensuring the integrity of the patient-physician relationship. No governmental body should interfere in our members’ obligation to provide evidence-based information to their patients.”

The **National Family Planning and Reproductive Health Association** warned: “The long-term health consequences of decimating the nation’s family planning program would be dire. We would see a dramatic reduction of critical health services, resulting in an increased rate of unintended pregnancies and STDs. The public health community implores the Trump administration to stop its unrelenting assault on birth control and preventive care.”