



Family Planning Funding in New Jersey: Essential Health Care During a Pandemic

Imagine what it's like to face the financial uncertainties brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. Now, imagine also thinking you might have a sexually transmitted infection, or you're running low on birth control, or you just discovered a lump in your breast. This is why Planned Parenthood continues to provide essential health care during the COVID-19 pandemic. **In a public health crisis, we need more access to family planning services – not less.**

We have heard stories like this from our patients all throughout this pandemic. From the mother who needed affordable birth control to continue planning her family after **she and her husband were both laid off** with seven children at home; to the woman whose **life was saved** after we diagnosed her ectopic pregnancy which required emergency surgery; to the man who tested positive for HIV at a local hospital and had **no idea where to turn**; Planned Parenthood health centers have been open during this pandemic to provide the care our patients need and deserve.

In 2020, as we face this global health emergency with consequences we are just beginning to understand, funding essential safety net programs including family planning is critical, now more than ever, especially given that we know **cutting funds for preventative health care can lead to tragic health outcomes**. New Jersey's elected leaders face tough decisions in the days ahead, but the health care community is in this together with you – our collective investment in high-quality, affordable reproductive health care services helps keep our communities healthy.

Historical Impact of Funding

New Jersey has taken big steps in recent years to be a champion for access to sexual and reproductive health care. The first bill Governor Murphy signed after taking office reinstated critical funding for family planning services to help prevent unintended pregnancies through contraception, reduce the spread of sexually transmitted infections through testing and treatment, and screen for cervical and other cancers. Moreover, **the Governor has continued to protect and expand access to reproductive and sexual health care services throughout his tenure**, most recently deeming family planning services as essential during the public health emergency related to COVID-19.¹

After the previous gubernatorial administration continuously vetoed family planning funding from the state budget for eight straight years, New Jersey felt the impact deeply. Health centers closed, reduced hours, or cut services; STIs increased 35 percent statewide and more than 50 percent in over half of the state's counties; breast and cervical cancer rates increased an alarming 25 percent among Latinas; and there was an increase in the need for access to affordable contraception.²

Thankfully, with legislative support, Governor Murphy's reinstatement of the family planning funds in 2018, New Jersey made a much needed investment in our health care infrastructure and in New Jersey residents themselves. **In just two and half years, here's what we've been able to do at Planned Parenthood:**

- We operate 22 Planned Parenthood health centers across the state;
- We continue to offer critical reproductive and sexual health care services, including lifesaving cancer screenings, affordable birth control, and STI testing and treatment;
- We have expanded our hours of operation so that patients have more options to seek care, including at night and on the weekends; and
- We have offered additional services to our patients, such as LGBTQ health services, free STI testing, and transportation to health centers.

In 2019, this is what those funds provided:

- 126,500 patient visits at 22 Planned Parenthood health centers across the state
- 27,000 cancer screenings, including Pap tests and cancer screenings
- 186,250 STD & HIV tests and treatment
- 89,500 cycles of birth control

Investing in Communities of Color and Reducing Barriers to Care

Over 85 percent of the New Jerseyans that receive health care at a Planned Parenthood health center each year have an annual income at or below 150 percent of the federal poverty level – roughly \$37,650 for a family of four. The COVID-19 pandemic has deeply impacted New Jerseyans, as individuals have lost their jobs, or become the sole breadwinners for their families. The New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development processed unemployment benefits for 1.1 million New Jerseyans³ due to the pandemic's economic downturn, and according to the Kaiser Family Foundation, approximately 883,000 New Jerseyans lost their health insurance coverage due to COVID-19-related job loss. **An estimated 274,000 individuals who have lost their health insurance are not eligible for any form of financial assistance to help get coverage, such as qualifying for Medicaid or ACA Marketplace tax credits, meaning that nearly 1 out of every 3 New Jerseyans who lost their job due to COVID-19 is at risk for remaining uninsured.**⁴

With women, and especially women of color, disproportionately bearing the impact of the crisis⁵, as essential frontline workers as well as those particularly vulnerable to the health and economic impacts of the pandemic, **this is the time to invest more in their access to health care, not less.** This health crisis is impacting communities of color and families in the undocumented community at an overwhelming rate, exacerbating existing barriers to health care. In a report recently released by Make the Road NJ, a staggering 75 percent of all survey respondents – and **85 percent of undocumented individuals – report having no health insurance.**⁶ Undoubtedly, these individuals, in addition to the newly uninsured, will depend on the publicly-funded safety net providers, like Planned Parenthood health centers, to access essential health care in the coming months and years.

If the human and health care impact isn't enough reason to invest in family planning programs, there is also an economic imperative. For every dollar invested in family planning, the government saves up to \$7 down the line⁷. That's because patients are not only able to access care when they need it most, but they are also able to seek preventative care and mitigate potential adverse health outcomes, such as averted unintended pregnancies and prevented sexually transmitted infections, for which treatment could be more expensive.

For all of the reasons outlined here, we request that the State continue to fully fund New Jersey's family planning providers, including Planned Parenthood, at current levels. This funding, which includes both general family planning dollars and funding for providers who have been forced out of the federal Title X program, will help ensure that New Jersey's family planning clinicians can continue to provide the high-quality, affordable, lifesaving care New Jerseyans need to stay healthy.

Endnotes

- 1 NJ Exec. Order No. 109 (Mar. 23, 2020), <https://nj.gov/infobank/eo/056murphy/pdf/EO-109.pdf>
- 2 Access at Risk: Reproductive Health and Family Planning in New Jersey (2017, February). Retrieved from <http://ppactionnj.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Planned-Parenthood-Action-Fund-of-NJ-Access-at-Risk-2017.pdf>
- 3 (2020, May 28). Retrieved from https://www.nj.gov/labor/lwdhome/press/2020/20200528_paymentsupdate.shtml
- 4 Kaiser Family Foundation. (2020, May 13). Eligibility for ACA Health Coverage Following Job Loss. Retrieved from <https://www.kff.org/report-section/eligibility-for-aca-health-coverage-following-job-loss-appendix/>
- 5 (2020, April 27). Retrieved from <https://www.plannedparenthoodaction.org/pressroom/nations-leading-advocates-launch-we-demand-more-coalition-to-demand-congress-do-more-to-support-women-and-families-during-covid-19-crisis-coalition-unveils-new-video-and-six-figure-ad-campaign-calling-on-senators-in-battleground-states-to-take-action>
- 6 Make the Road New Jersey. (2020, April 23). Retrieved May 29, 2020, from <https://app.box.com/s/ad9my2650tj0errprl5b0ab0p0v0e68>
- 7 Frost, J. J., Sonfield, A., Zolna, M. R., & Finer, L. B. (2014). Return on Investment: A Fuller Assessment of the Benefits and Cost Savings of the US Publicly Funded Family Planning Program. *Milbank Quarterly*, 92(4), 696–749. doi: 10.1111/1468-0009.12080