

Dear Senate Majority Leader Billig, Speaker Jinkins, Senate Ways & Means Chair Rolfes, and House Appropriations Chair Ormsby,

As you consider the 2021-23 biennial budget, the undersigned organizations urge you to include \$5.2 million of general fund-state dollars for sexual and reproductive health rates in the Health Care Authority budget to keep family planning safety net provider health centers open across Washington State. The rates for most family planning services have been flat for more than a decade and safety net providers simply can no longer sustain these losses.

Washington has a proud legacy of protecting and advancing sexual and reproductive health rights, but we're in serious danger of letting health care access for thousands of people with low incomes crumble amid a pandemic. After the closure of three Planned Parenthood health centers early this year, more doors could close and more Washingtonians would lose access to health care if the Legislature does not act this session. Governor Inslee took the first step by including family planning funding in his budget and now we are calling on legislators to take the next step by including \$5.2 million in the 2021-23 operating budget, which secures an additional \$10.9 million in matching federal funds. This funding will stabilize reimbursement rates for providers in the state's Sexual and Reproductive Health Program, formerly known as Title X.

Chronic underinvestment in the family planning safety net exacerbates the disparities experienced by Medicaid patients, who are disproportionately Black, Indigenous, and Latinx due to centuries of racist health care policies. This is true across the country and Washington is no exception, especially in rural areas where distance barriers further impact underserved BIPOC communities. Equitable access to affordable, high quality family planning providers and services is a crucial component in reducing existing health disparities and helping all communities in Washington thrive.

Family planning is essential care. It is also a fundamental economic issue for women and working families and one of the most powerful and cost-effective investments Washington can make. For every \$1 invested in family planning, Washington saves at least \$7 on unintended pregnancy costs and long-term social service costs that we could invest in other critical services. In the wake of COVID-19 and the associated economic crisis, our ability to recover depends on making smart investments that support our communities and keep Washingtonians healthy.

Family planning providers play a unique role in the safety net, with patients often preferring to seek care at these sites over other providers. Six in ten patients visiting family planning specialty clinics said they saw other medical providers but chose to receive contraceptive care at a reproductive health care clinic. Family planning sites serve as the sole providers for the remaining 40% of patients, demonstrating the critical role these providers play.<sup>1</sup> If safety net family planning providers are forced to close more doors, patients will lose access to their preferred provider for this critical care and many more will have nowhere else to turn for quality, affordable care.

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<sup>1</sup> Frost JJ, Gold RB, Bucek A. Specialized family planning clinics in the United States: why women choose them and their role in meeting women's health care needs. *Women's Health Issues*. 2012 Nov-Dec;22(6):e519-25. doi: 10.1016/j.whi.2012.09.002. PMID: 23122212.

These providers are more important than ever as we recover and rebuild from the pandemic, which has caused women – particularly women of color – to reconsider their plans to have children. 34% of women reported wanting to delay pregnancy or have fewer children due to the pandemic. For women of color, the impact was much more severe: 44% of Black women and 48% of Hispanic women expressed a desire to delay pregnancy or have fewer children. At the same time, one third of women – and 38% of Black women and 45% of Hispanic women – have reported experiencing delays or cancellations of sexual and reproductive health care due to the pandemic.<sup>2</sup> The pandemic is not just changing fertility preferences; it is also undermining women of color's ability to access the basic family planning care that would help them realize their fertility goals and exercise their right to plan their families.

Everyone in Washington - regardless of income, race, ethnicity, immigration status, zip code, ability and more - deserves to have equal access to family planning and reproductive health care. We must invest now to continue our legacy of protecting and advancing reproductive rights while persisting in our fight for essential care in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. In its FY21-23 appropriations process, Washington has the opportunity to stand up for reproductive health access and support strong public funding for the family planning network. The undersigned organizations urge you to begin stabilizing the family planning safety net with this meaningful investment.

Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,

Alliance for a Healthy WA  
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists - WA (ACOG)  
Amerigroup of Washington  
Asian Pacific Islander Coalition - Spokane Chapter  
Better Health Together  
Building Changes  
Cedar River Clinics  
Eastern Washington Voters  
Economic Opportunity Institute  
Foundation for Healthy Generations  
Fuse Washington  
Greater Spokane Progress  
Hispanic Business Professional Association  
Indivisible Tacoma  
Legal Voice  
Mt. Baker Planned Parenthood

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<sup>2</sup> Lindberg LD et al., Early Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic: Findings from the 2020 Guttmacher Survey of Reproductive Health Experiences, New York: Guttmacher Institute, 2020, <https://www.guttmacher.org/report/early-impacts-covid-19-pandemic-findings-2020-guttmacher-survey-reproductive-health>

Muslims for Community, Action and Support  
NARAL Pro-Choice Washington  
National Association of Social Workers, WA Chapter  
National Women's Political Caucus of Washington  
North Sound ACH  
Northwest Abortion Access Fund  
Northwest Health Law Advocates  
Northwest Progressive Institute  
Peace & Justice Action League of Spokane  
Planned Parenthood Columbia Willamette  
Planned Parenthood of Greater Washington and North Idaho  
Planned Parenthood of the Great Northwest and the Hawaiian Islands  
Planned Parenthood Votes Northwest and Hawai'i  
Raiz Of Planned Parenthood of Greater Washington and North Idaho  
Refugee Connections Spokane  
Riveters Collective  
SAGE  
Salem Lutheran Church  
Smith-Barbieri Progressive Fund  
Spokane Immigrant Rights Coalition  
Spokane Valley Community Advocates  
Upstream  
Washington Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics  
Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs (WCSAP)  
Washington State Medical Association (WSMA)  
Washington State Public Health Association  
Western States Center  
YWCA North Central Washington