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Statewide Defend Title X Coalition Declares: No Gag Rule!

Proposed Rule Change Would Gut Federal Family Planning Program and Place Reproductive Health Care Out of Reach

AUGUSTA — Today, a statewide coalition representing tens of thousands of patients, providers, and advocates will voice its collective opposition to the Trump administration’s proposed Domestic Gag Rule, which would gut the Title X federal family planning program, making it harder for low-income Mainers to access affordable birth control and other reproductive health services.

The proposed rule would:

- Ban federal Title X funds from going to any provider that also provides abortion services;
- Restrict referrals for abortions;
- Eliminate the requirement for nondirective pregnancy options counseling;
- Eliminate the requirement that Title X projects offer the full range of family planning methods;
- Undermine confidentiality, especially for minors.

Dozens of Maine-based groups and individuals have signed onto a letter decrying the Gag Rule as “an affront to our collective values.”

“The proposal flouts science and medical ethics, interfering with the provider-patient relationship and eliminating the requirement that family planning programs provide: comprehensive options counseling to pregnant women, including about abortion; medically accurate health care; and the full range of proven contraceptive methods,” the letter reads. “Furthermore, by prohibiting organizations from providing abortion services and federally funded family planning services at the same location, the rule would endanger the very existence of safety net clinics that provide high-quality reproductive health care in under-served communities.”

Signatories include: Maine Family Planning, Planned Parenthood of Northern New England (PPNNE), ACLU of Maine, Maine Women’s Lobby, Suit Up Maine, Maine Academy of Family Physicians, Maine Providers Standing Up for Health Care, Mabel Wadsworth Feminist Health Center, Maine Trans Net, Maine Equal Justice Partners, Grandmothers for Reproductive Rights, American Academy of Pediatrics – Maine Chapter, Consumers for Affordable Health Care, Maine People’s Alliance, National Council of Jewish Women, Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence, Maine Health Equity Alliance, Southern Maine Workers’ Center, Mainers for Accountable Leadership, gubernatorial candidate Janet Mills, and several individual providers.

The Defend Title X Coalition will hold a **press conference and rally on Tuesday, July 17 at 11 am at the Maine Family Planning headquarters in Augusta (43 Gabriel Drive, parking available in lot)**. Maine Family Planning is the state’s Title X grantee, administering federal funds and working with partners like PPNNE to serve roughly 22,000 Mainers a year who depend on Title X for affordable birth control, STD testing and treatment, and cancer screenings, along with other preventive health services.

Speakers are:

- **Kohar der Simonian, MD**

Dr. der Simonian is Maine Family Planning's Medical Director. She is a native Mainer and a core faculty member of Maine Medical Partners. She received her Medical Doctorate from the University of Vermont College of Medicine and before returning to Maine in 2016, she served as an assistant professor at the University of California San Francisco Department of Family and Community Medicine and Obstetrics/Gynecology.

- **Jodi Bolduc**

Jodi Bolduc is a mom and longtime family planning patient from Livermore, Maine.

- **Sherry Huber**

Sherry F. Huber is an American politician and environmentalist. She was a Republican member of the Maine House of Representatives from 1976 to 1982. Considered a moderate, Huber focused much of her time in the legislature on energy and family planning/reproductive health issues. With her late husband David, she helped create Maine Family Planning nearly 50 years ago. Later, as state legislators, they helped shepherd a bill to law that authorized state funds to be combined with federal funds to support Maine's family planning system.

- **Stephanie Small, NP**

Stephanie Small is a nurse practitioner for Planned Parenthood of Northern New England (PPNNE) and PPNNE's Regional Clinical Director for Maine.

- **Sam Zager, MD**

Sam Zager is a Maine-trained family physician who practices in Portland and volunteers regularly in a teen clinic that receives Title X funding. He has published original research and opinion pieces in medical journals and newspapers, and has testified in Augusta and Washington DC regarding the social determinants of health, public health, and health policy. Dr Zager leads Maine Providers Standing Up for Healthcare-- a statewide, grassroots advocacy organization that has allied with Maine Family Planning, Planned Parenthood, and other organizations to protect and expand healthcare for all Mainers. This group of hundreds of frontline healthcare providers was honored to receive an organizational "Healthcare Hero" Award from Consumers for Affordable Healthcare at its 30th Anniversary celebration in June.

The Department of Health and Human Services is accepting comments on the proposed rule change until July 31, 2018.

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