

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Tuesday, July 16, 2019

Maine Family Planning Withdraws from Title X Family Planning Program Will Not Comply with Trump-Pence Gag Rule

AUGUSTA — Maine Family Planning announced Tuesday that, after nearly 50 years as Maine's grantee for the Title X National Family Planning Program, it will withdraw from the program rather than comply with the Trump-Pence Gag Rule.

MFP was established in 1971, soon after the bipartisan creation of the Title X National Family Planning Program, to administer the newly created family planning system in Maine. Title X currently buoys a network of 50 health care providers throughout Maine. At our 18 clinics and with partners like Planned Parenthood of Northern New England and community health centers, we serve more than 23,000 low-income women, men, and teens each year, offering expert care to folks in underserved communities across our large and rural state. Our Title X patients rely on us for affordable birth control, STD testing and treatment, and cancer screenings, along with other preventive health services.

MFP also separately provides abortion care at its 18 direct-service sites throughout Maine. No federal money is used to provide abortion services.

The Gag Rule restricts how Title X health care providers can speak to their patients about abortion and requires strict, cost-prohibitive physical separation of abortion services from family planning services. Complying with the Gag Rule would mean closing up to 85 percent of health centers providing abortion care and forcing unethical limitations on medical professionals. None of the Gag Rule's provisions are rooted in public health. In fact, by increasing barriers to birth control, abortion care, and a wide range of sexual and reproductive health care services, the Gag Rule would make our state less healthy. We cannot abide by this attack.

Our withdrawal from Title X means we are foregoing close to \$2 million in federal funds. However, for the moment we are not closing any health care centers — an outcome that would inevitably hit poor and rural Mainers, who already suffer from a lack of health care access, hardest. MFP is committed to preserving Maine's robust family planning network, but the current situation is untenable.

Without alternative sources of public funding, MFP must fill the gap using its own limited financial reserves to support the network of family planning clinics it directly operates, as well as the various health care providers it subcontracts with through Title X, including Federally Qualified Health Centers, Planned Parenthood of Northern New England, and four school-based health centers. To be clear, this is only a very short-term solution.

On June 21, the Center for Reproductive Rights and Covington & Burling LLP filed an emergency request in federal court to block the Gag Rule on MFP's behalf. Judge Lance Walker denied our motion for a preliminary injunction, but we will continue to pursue all available options to challenge the Gag Rule in Court. A motion to amend the denial of the injunction and for a stay of the Gag Rule pending appeal will be filed July 16.

###

CONTACT: Deirdre Fulton McDonough, (207) 835.9442, dfultonmcdonough@mainefamilyplanning.org