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July 29, 2009

Governor Jan Brewer
1700 West Washington Street
Phoenix, AZ 85007

Dear Governor Brewer:

It is with sincere and deep regret that we write today to resign our respective memberships on the Governor's Commission on Women's and Children's Health. We cannot continue – through our participation in the Commission – to endorse the numerous policies your administration has taken that endanger women's health, nor to see the work of the Commission undermined by your administration's political considerations.

Planned Parenthood believes strongly in the importance of the Commission's mission and work. Indeed, the Commission was created by Governor Jane Hull following our recommendation.

However, since you've taken office it has become clear that political priorities outweigh women's health priorities. This is disrespectful to the public health leaders who have donated their time and best thinking to the women and families of Arizona through their participation in the Commission's deliberations on critical issues including teen pregnancy and inadequate access to basic prevention-oriented health care.

Among the actions taken by you and your administration that lead us to conclude that you have priorities different from those of the public health community are:

- The decision to ban information about family planning and sexually transmitted infection prevention at two state-sponsored Women's Health Expos in Phoenix.
- The decision to resume ineffective abstinence education programming that also prohibits distribution of life-saving information about how to reduce exposure to HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.
- The decision to sign House Bill 2564, a measure which will lessen access to abortion care in Arizona, significantly increase health care costs for Arizona women and families, and risk exposing the private health care decisions of Arizona families to the general public.
- The decision to sign Senate Bill 1175, which will reduce the scope of practice of duly licensed Arizona health professionals, exacerbating the state's already dire shortage.
- The administration's decision to rescind the agreement between the Arizona Department of Public Health and Planned Parenthood to promote testing and treatment for sexually transmitted infections.

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Further deepening our concern has been the repeated rejections by your administration of Planned Parenthood's requests to meet with you so that we might describe the full scope of services our organization provides, services that are enabling women, men and young people to reduce their risk of disease, detect cancer earlier, and prevent unplanned pregnancy. Six out of seven women who come to Planned Parenthood do so for services other than abortion, a fact you would know had we been able to meet. Unfortunately, you have avoided that opportunity.

And while you have steadfastly closed your door to Planned Parenthood, you have simultaneously courted the favor of the Center for Arizona Policy, a religious organization that proudly boasts a 13 year history of work to limit women's access to reproductive health care, and young-people's access to sexual health education.

We recognize the right of every governor to make political decisions. However, the policies you and your administration have adopted appear to be solely driven by political considerations, given that they squarely contradict and have also met with opposition from public health leaders including the Arizona Board of Nursing, the Arizona College of Emergency Physicians, the Arizona Nurses Association and the Arizona Public Health Association. Your administration's policies are distracting and censuring the knowledgeable and dedicated public health and education professionals at the Arizona Departments of Public Health and Education. In so doing, your administration is wasting taxpayer dollars when Arizona government is facing the most disastrous shortage of resources in our state's history.

These decisions are putting Arizonans in harms way.

For all of these reasons, we submit our resignations from the Governor's Commission on Women's and Children's Health effective today.

Sincerely,

Candace Lew, MD
Chairperson, Board of Directors

Bryan Howard
President & CEO

CC: Dana Naimark
Michele Robson