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## **PLANNED PARENTHOOD CRITICIZES HHS MIDNIGHT REGULATION JEOPARDIZING WOMEN'S HEALTH**

Washington, DC — The Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA) sharply criticized a last-minute regulation by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) that poses a serious threat to patients' rights to receive complete and accurate health care information and services.

"This midnight regulation, issued in the last days of the Bush administration, undermines this country's fragile health care system as well as patients' access to health care information and services," said PPFA President Cecile Richards. "We look forward to working with President-elect Obama and leaders in Congress to repeal this disastrous rule and expand patients' access to full health care information and services — not limit it."

Under the new rule, doctors, physicians, and health care workers of all kinds can deny patients vital health care information and services, without the patient even knowing. This rule will restrict health care access at nearly 600,000 health care facilities. With more than 45 million Americans currently uninsured, this is no time to make access to health care even more difficult. In addition, this rule could potentially create total chaos in an already stressed health care system, particularly for low-income women and families whose options are already limited.

"We are shocked that the Bush administration chose to finalize its midnight regulation and to take this parting shot at women's health and ignore patients' rights to receive the critical health care services and information they deserve," said Richards. "From day one, this administration has made ideology and politics a priority over patients' rights and needs, and this regulation is no different."

Roughly 200,000 U.S. citizens, federal and state elected officials, medical organizations, and health care advocacy and religious organizations submitted comments opposing the misguided rule. The regulation broadens the scope of existing laws and reaches beyond congressional intent by focusing solely on providers, with absolutely no protections to ensure patients receive critical health care information and services.

In addition to the comments of 90,000 Planned Parenthood supporters, opposition was also voiced through official comments to HHS by these elected officials at the federal and state levels:

- a bipartisan coalition of more than 100 members of Congress
- a bipartisan group of governors, including Governors John Baldacci (D-ME), Chet Culver (D-IA), Jim Doyle (D-WI), Christine Gregoire (D-WA), David Paterson (D-NY), M. Jodi Rell (R-CT), Edward Rendell (D-PA), and Ted Strickland (D-OH)

- a bipartisan group of 13 attorneys general from Arizona, Connecticut, Illinois, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Montana, New Jersey, Oregon, Rhode Island, Utah, and Vermont; Attorneys general from California, Illinois, Massachusetts, and Minnesota, submitted individual comments.
- State legislators from a number of states wrote in opposition to the regulation, including state legislators from Oregon, Texas, Vermont, Washington, and Wisconsin.

In addition, The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) Legal Counsel and the Commissioners submitted letters of opposition to this rule, saying it overlaps with existing law, that it is potentially confusing to the regulated community, and that it will impose a burden on covered employers, particularly small employers.

Nongovernmental organizations also made their opposition known:

- More than 80 organizations joined Planned Parenthood in signing onto an opposition letter, including the American Nurses Association, the American Medical Student Association, the American Social Health Association, the Association of Reproductive Health Professionals, and several prominent HIV/AIDS, international health, and gay rights organizations.
- Prominent health care provider associations and health advocacy organizations weighed in with their opposition, including the American Medical Association, the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology, the National Association of Community Health Centers, the American Public Health Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs.

In May 2008, the White House issued a directive to administrative agencies to submit all proposed regulations by June 1, 2008, except in “extraordinary circumstances.” The purpose of the deadline was to ensure that agencies did not engage in ill-conceived rulemaking prior to a change of administration. Yet HHS submitted its proposed rule in late August 2008 and put it on the fast track with a shortened 30-day public comment period. Now this last-minute regulation will take effect just two days before the next administration takes office.

Click [HERE](#) for more resources on opposition to HHS midnight rule, including the letters listed above.

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Planned Parenthood Federation of America is the nation's leading sexual and reproductive health care advocate and provider. We believe that everyone has the right to choose when or whether to have a child, and that every child should be wanted and loved. Planned Parenthood affiliates operate more than 880 health centers nationwide, providing medical services and sexuality education for millions of women, men, and teenagers each year. We also work with allies worldwide to ensure that all women and men have the right and the means to meet their sexual and reproductive health care needs.