

Group's change of heart victory for women's health in Texas, US

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According to the Texas Department of State Health Services, 300,000 Texas women will no longer have access to breast and cervical cancer screenings, treatment for sexually transmitted infections or long-term contraception to plan and space their next pregnancies, all as a result of this extremist agenda. Komen's original announcement last week initially left anti-choice opponents cheering yet another victory that, for a short time anyway, threatened the elimination of breast cancer screenings for low-income women across Texas.

When so many Waco women and their families are without health insurance, ideology and politics have no place in determining where cancer screenings are provided.

Here in Waco, Planned Parenthood of Central Texas provides a life-saving breast and cancer screening program primarily funded by the Breast and Cervical Cancer Screening (BCCS) program and Komen Central Texas. Together these funding sources provide thousands of women with access to preventive screening mammography, diagnostic services and lifesaving treatment.

In 2010 alone, 6,341 Central Texas women received breast cancer screenings at Planned Parenthood. Also in 2010, Planned Parenthood in Waco provided access to mammography screening for 609 low-income women; diagnostic services for 125 local women; and diagnosed breast cancer in 20 women in our community.

All of the funds Komen grants to Planned Parenthood of Central Texas go directly to pay for screening mammography and diagnostic services. Planned Parenthood does not keep *any* Komen funds to administer the program.

As the only government-funded family planning provider in McLennan County and the only BCCS provider in the 12-county area surrounding and including Waco, Planned Parenthood serves women who have no other place to go for health care. It's in a unique position to connect those most in need of assistance to lifesaving cancer screening, diagnostic and treatment services.

Whether a patient comes to Planned Parenthood seeking an annual exam or a screening mammogram and finds that she needs further testing and cancer treatment, or she comes seeking assistance because of a cancer diagnosis, our staff ensures that patients are cared for throughout their fight with cancer, providing a continuum of health care that is not broken.

One of our patients recently wrote, "Planned Parenthood helped me when I could not get in anywhere else. They sent me for a mammogram, a sonogram and biopsies, and the surgeon said I needed to start chemo immediately — that I had Stage Three breast cancer. I had stopped working to take care of my mother, who has Alzheimer's, so I had no insurance and had no idea that I'd be dealing with breast cancer. I don't know where I'd be without Planned Parenthood."

The community response to last week's decision by Komen has been overwhelming in messages of support and donations to Planned Parenthood. As a result, we know that regardless of what source of health and lifesaving funds the anti-choice extremists target next, Planned Parenthood will continue to be here for those who depend on us.

Felicia Chase Goodman is director of community affairs for Planned Parenthood of Central Texas.

The outpouring of support for women in need of lifesaving breast cancer screenings here in Waco and across the United States last week has been astonishing and is a tribute to the large number of men and women who stood up for breast cancer screenings over politics.

In Waco, the treasured relationship between Komen Central Texas and Planned

Parenthood was challenged. But we're heartened by national Komen's recommitment so that we can continue to work together on our shared commitment to breast health for the most underserved women. We're enormously grateful that the national Susan G. Komen for the Cure has clarified its grant-making criteria. We look forward to continuing our partnership with Komen



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partners, leaders and volunteers here in Waco.

Planned Parenthood of Central Texas was proud to be among the recently announced 2012 Komen Central Texas grantees. With national Komen's recommitment to this partnership and reversal of their announcement earlier last week that Planned Parenthood would no longer be eligible for Komen grants, the Waco women who depend on us can breathe more easily.

For years, anti-choice opponents have been pressuring Komen to eliminate their vital partnerships with Planned Parenthood health centers. It's important to note that these are the same anti-choice activists who successfully lobbied to eliminate two-thirds of the family planning budget that provided free or low-cost health exams and birth control for low-income Texas women this past year.