



Felicia Chase Goodman, guest columnist: Planned Parenthood political attack will hurt women

By Felicia Chase Goodman
Guest
columnist

Sunday February 27, 2011

Recently the U.S. House of Representatives voted to defund Planned Parenthood. Should this dangerous proposal become law, more than 8,000 Central Texas women would lose access to basic primary and preventive health care, such as lifesaving cancer screenings, contraception, HIV testing, STD testing and treatment and annual exams.

Planned Parenthood does more than any other U.S. organization to encourage the use of contraception. This proposal undermines Planned Parenthood's mission and would guarantee an increase in the number of unintended pregnancies.

How could those who say they oppose abortion do so much to undermine the family planning and contraception that help prevent the very need for it?

Even the supporters of this extreme legislation do not pretend that this political attack on Planned Parenthood will save a single cent in the budget. Nor have they explained where the 8,000 women served by Planned Parenthood of Central Texas — and the 3 million women nationwide — will go to get the care they need if this becomes law.

It is unrealistic to expect that other local health care providers — who are also facing severe budget cuts — will take on 8,000 new patients.

This does not include the more than 79,000 women in our community in need of services who we are unable to treat because of limited resources. Shouldn't we be talking about expanding access to this lifesaving health care, rather than ending it?

The amendment to cut Planned Parenthood's federal funding does nothing to reduce the deficit. It does nothing to improve the economy. In fact, costs associated with unintended pregnancy among the women we serve will only increase the financial burden for our community.

PPCT provided preventive medical services last year to thousands of women in Central Texas, including:

- * 16,882 breast cancer screenings.
- * 10,020 tests for sexually transmitted infections.
- * 10,396 hormonal birth control services and 50,675 condoms.

* 4,665 HIV tests.

* 500 mammogram referrals and 183 diagnostic mammogram referrals.

At an average cost of \$162 annually, a Planned Parenthood patient receives an annual physical examination that includes screening for Texas' top 10 health problems, as well as a year's supply of their contraceptive method of choice and education on its effective use.

Should that average Planned Parenthood patient not have the annual exam, not receive birth control, and become pregnant, the government will spend \$11,300 through Medicaid to pay for the birth and the first year of health care for that child. In 2007, 55 percent of the 3,513 births in McLennan County were paid for by Medicaid.

Eliminating these services will only increase the number of unintended pregnancies and drive up costs.

If Planned Parenthood is not here to help a woman access prenatal care, her baby's risk of pre-term delivery, low birth weight, and need for neonatal services will be much higher. As reported in the Trib last week, the average cost of caring for a newborn in the neonatal unit is \$250,000.

Clearly, a policy which defunds Planned Parenthood will cost the government — and our community — more in the long run.

It is obvious that when women have the ability and freedom to plan their own futures by delaying pregnancy until they are ready, they can make better decisions about the type of education, employment, economics and lifestyles they envision for themselves and their children.

Children born from unplanned pregnancies are at risk for a number of developmental problems, including lower vocabulary scores, delayed verbal development, reduced levels of educational attainment, poorer physical and mental health and higher levels of delinquency in adolescence, according to research from the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy.

One patient recently said to me: "If Planned Parenthood were not here, more women will have babies that they didn't plan to have. That's just not fair ... not fair to the woman, or to those children."

It now falls to U.S. senators and their constituents from both parties to join together to reject this extreme approach, restore common sense and guarantee that Planned Parenthood and the millions of Americans who count on us for health care are protected.

Felicia Chase Goodman is the CEO of Planned Parenthood of Central Texas.

Find this article at:

<http://www.wacotrib.com/opinion/columns/116996038.html>

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.