
The Public Affairs Pulse

Keeping You on Top of Legislative & Advocacy Issues

Final Ruling on State-Level Health Insurance Exchanges Released

WASHINGTON, DC — The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has released final regulations on state-based health insurance Exchanges created under the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Planned Parenthood has been working to ensure that health care reform rulemaking protects women's access to comprehensive coverage and to the essential community providers in their communities, a key element of which was the participation of Planned Parenthood affiliates. In addition to formal comments from coalition partners and state elected officials, 28 U.S. Senators and 109 members of the House weighed in on our behalf. In addition, Planned Parenthood affiliates attended every single HHS Exchange listening session to highlight our goals in health care reform. PPFA also had formal meetings with HHS and White House staff on these important issues.

Our advocacy around explicit protections in federal Exchange rulemaking did, however, compete with the overwhelming tide around state flexibility that has dominated ACA implementation since the law was passed nearly two years ago. While it's clear that, as essential community providers, family planning clinics must be included in state health insurance Exchanges, we will continue to explore opportunities to pursue additional federal protections.

The most important change is that the final rule includes a nondiscrimination provision that prevents states or Exchanges from passing laws or policies designed to exclude essential community providers like Planned Parenthood from state-based Exchanges. The final rule flat-out states that a qualified health plan issuer in an Exchange "may not be prohibited from contracting with any essential community provider." The inclusion of this protection is a win for Planned Parenthood and your work in both submitting comments and engaging your members of Congress on this issue were critical to having it added to the final rule.

With respect to the Nelson abortion provision (regarding the segregation of federal funds from abortion coverage), the final rule does not break new ground on implementing this controversial provision of the ACA. Instead, the final rule outlines the statute and includes language from segregation guidance that was released in September 2010. There is some indication that HHS will issue guidance further implementing the provision in the future. However, there is no expectation that it will happen before the fall.

As you know, health care reform implementation is a long, arduous—and often exciting—road that will be filled with ups and downs. While the final rule does not include some of our priorities, it does include a critical protection for women's access because of the work

you did over the course of the past few months. Furthermore, it is clear that HHS is looking for creative ways to protect Planned Parenthood's important role in the Exchanges. Planned Parenthood looks forward to working with our supporters to build on these improvements through future federal guidance—as well as state-level work—to ensure women have access to the coverage they need and the providers they trust.

PPWNM Celebrates 4th Annual GYT Month

April is Get Yourself Tested Month (GYT). Planned Parenthood has partnered with MTV and the Center for Disease Control (CDC) for the 4th annual GYT Campaign encouraging young people to take control of their sexual health by getting themselves tested for sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS.

PPWNM is participating this year by having educational materials available in our eight health centers as well as promoting a special offer through the end of April, which provides chlamydia, gonorrhea, and HIV testing, all for just \$50. We are hoping to encourage young people to come in, get tested, and tell their friends to get tested too.

