

PLANNED PARENTHOOD FEDERATION OF AMERICA
PLANNED PARENTHOOD OF GREATER OHIO
PLANNED PARENTHOOD SOUTHWEST OHIO

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Wednesday, May 11, 2016

CONTACT: Planned Parenthood media's office at 212-261-4433; media.office@ppfa.org

Planned Parenthood Sues Ohio to Protect Patients' Care

This comes as politicians in at least 24 states target care at Planned Parenthood

Washington, D.C. – Planned Parenthood today filed suit in federal district court in Ohio to protect access to health care and education for tens of thousands of Ohioans, including free HIV tests, cancer screenings, domestic violence education through the Violence Against Women Act, [much-needed sex education for youth](#) in foster care and the juvenile detention system, and Planned Parenthood's [Healthy Moms, Healthy Babies](#) program. This law would have an outsized impact on groups who have historically faced systemic barriers in accessing quality health care, including people with low incomes and communities of color. For a copy of the filed complaint seeking relief before the law takes effect on May 23, please click [here](#).

Since July, Planned Parenthood has filed suit in 15 cases to protect access to care at our health centers -- though litigation alone will not combat the surge of attacks since last July. In the last week alone, we have filed suit in two states and three states have enacted "defunding" measures. Since July, politicians in [at least 24 states](#) have taken action to "defund" Planned Parenthood and block care at Planned Parenthood health centers. This unprecedented wave of attacks could have devastating consequences for women, men and young people across the country in decreasing access to basic health care. According to the [Congressional Budget Office](#), if patients who rely on public health programs are blocked from coming to Planned Parenthood, up to **650,000 people** would face decreased access to health care in just a one-year period.

Statement from Cecile Richards, President, Planned Parenthood Federation of America:

"Since July, politicians in 24 states have tried to strip women of basic health care, and several, like Ohio, have done just that. If this isn't cause for alarm, I don't know what is. State lawmakers have been waging a political war on care at Planned Parenthood, putting the health and lives of women at risk in the process. We'll continue to fight in court for our patients in Ohio and across the country. The sad fact is, in 2016, it shouldn't take a lawsuit to protect every person's fundamental right to quality health care."

Statement from Jerry Lawson, CEO, Planned Parenthood Southwest Ohio:

"For our patients, it's not about politics, it's about their health and their lives. If you have a lump in your breast or need an HIV test, lawmakers should be making it easier, not harder, to get the care you need. Politicians in Ohio will stop at nothing to ban abortion, and they're willing to decimate access to preventive care in the process. Rest assured, we will leave no stone unturned to protect access to care for the Ohioans who trust and rely on us."

Statement from Iris E. Harvey, President and CEO, Planned Parenthood of Greater Ohio:

“We are in court because everyone deserves access to quality, affordable, compassionate care no matter who you are or where you are from. Let’s call this what it is, an attack on people who already have the least access to care, all in the name of politics. Lawmakers have gone so far as to claim that women can get cancer screenings at food banks. This goes to show why politicians in Columbus have no business writing laws about women’s health.”

In February, Governor John Kasich signed a sweeping law that bars Planned Parenthood health centers from providing care and educational services through several public programs – despite overwhelming opposition from [public health experts](#) and [Ohioans in Columbus](#) and [online](#). Under the Kasich administration, Ohio has passed [18 anti-women’s health measures](#), and [nearly half of all health centers](#) that provided safe, legal abortion have shuttered since he took office. Planned Parenthood filed suit in Ohio to fight for the right of low-income Ohioans to access critical services.

This legislation slashes Planned Parenthood’s *Healthy Moms, Healthy Babies* program – despite Ohio having one of the [highest infant mortality rates](#) for African Americans in the nation. It is the largest infant mortality prevention program in the state and serves hundreds of new or expectant mothers annually. Mahoning County Health Commissioner Pat Sweeney [said](#): “They [Planned Parenthood] are very active and very effective. They specifically target women in the most at-risk population and work with those women to help with the significant issues of housing and food and employment, really significant issues, not just their health care.” Sweeney continued, “It’s going to be a really hard blow to the community.”

This law would also end access to nearly 70,000 free STD screenings that Planned Parenthood provides through the CDC STD Prevention program. It would also cut more than 5,000 free HIV and STD tests for individuals with higher risk factors for HIV, particularly within communities of African American women and men who have sex with men. Ohio has the 5th and 6th highest number of [gonorrhea](#) and [chlamydia](#) diagnoses in the country, respectively, and was [ranked 12th nationwide](#) in the number of HIV diagnoses. Jessica Sherman from the AIDS Resource Center [testified against the bill](#) saying: “We need to increase the number of cancer and STI screenings and people on birth control. If you want to improve health, then cutting this funding would be devastating and would be a giant step backward. When you cut funding, you say that women don’t deserve this reproductive health access.”

Blocking care at Planned Parenthood has very real and devastating consequences for the communities served. After Scott County, Indiana, forced the local Planned Parenthood health center to shut its doors in 2013, the community was left with nowhere to turn for HIV testing and education as [the county faces an unprecedented HIV outbreak](#), which Governor Mike Pence deemed an “epidemic.” In Texas, a recent study in the [New England Journal of Medicine](#) showed that blocking patients from going to Planned Parenthood led to a [35% decline in women on Medicaid using the most effective methods of birth control and a dramatic 27% spike in births among women](#) who had previously had access to injectable contraception through Medicaid.

Planned Parenthood health centers [serve an outsized role in meeting the health care needs](#) of those who rely on federally- funded health programs. More than half of Planned Parenthood's health centers across the U.S. are in rural or medically underserved areas, meaning that often without Planned Parenthood, patients would have nowhere else to turn for reproductive health care. Approximately forty percent of patients served by Planned Parenthood of Greater Ohio are low-income. Seventy-five percent of the patients served by Planned Parenthood Southwest Ohio are low-income.

The plaintiffs are represented by WilmerHale, as well as the Cincinnati-based firm Gerhardstein & Branch and lawyers from PPFA.

###

Planned Parenthood is the nation's leading provider and advocate of high-quality, affordable health care for women, men, and young people, as well as the nation's largest provider of sex education. With over 650 health centers across the country, Planned Parenthood organizations serve all patients with care and compassion, with respect and without judgment. Through health centers, programs in schools and communities, and online resources, Planned Parenthood is a trusted source of reliable health information that allows people to make informed health decisions. We do all this because we care passionately about helping people lead healthier lives.