

Dr. Leana Wen

President, Planned Parenthood Federation of America and Planned Parenthood Action Fund

On September 12, 2018, Planned Parenthood [announced](#) that [Dr. Leana Wen](#) will serve as its sixth president -- the first time in nearly 50 years that a physician will lead the organization. Planned Parenthood is the largest provider of reproductive care and sex education in the nation. Dr. Wen -- an emergency physician who currently serves as the Commissioner of Health for the City of Baltimore -- will help Planned Parenthood continue to provide vital health services to the more than 2.4 million patients who rely on its health centers each year. Along with Planned Parenthood's 12 million supporters, she will fight to protect the fundamental right to reproductive health care, and expand access for all women and men.

THE "DOCTOR FOR THE CITY" IN BALTIMORE

"I want to ask what I couldn't in medical training. I want to go beyond figuring out how to get one patient to dialysis and instead tackle the factors that led her and many people like her to develop kidney failure in the first place. I am eager to bring together hospitals, civic leaders, government, frontline providers and people in the community to work on what matters most to improve health for all." - Dr. Leana Wen [on her appointment to serve as Health Commissioner](#) for the City of Baltimore

- In 2015, Dr. Wen was [sworn in as Commissioner of Health for the City of Baltimore](#), where she currently leads the Baltimore City Health Department, the oldest, continuously-operating health department in the United States, formed in 1793.
- Known as the "Doctor for the City" in Baltimore, [she oversees](#) more than **1,000 employees** with an annual budget of **\$130 million**; two clinics that provide more than **18,000 patients** with reproductive health services; and medical programs for **180 Baltimore schools**.
- Under her direction, the Baltimore City Health Department was recently recognized by the National Association of County and City Health Officials as the [Local Health Department of the Year](#).

Baltimore City, with **one of the highest fatality rates** in the country, is an epicenter for the opioid epidemic. As deaths across the country were increasing exponentially, Dr. Wen **boldly issued a blanket prescription** for Naloxone, the opioid antidote, to every one of Baltimore's 620,000 residents, giving everyday citizens the ability to save the lives of their neighbors. Since 2015, this program has saved nearly 3,000 lives.

Dr. Wen **has said** "infant mortality is an indicator of how a community takes care of its youngest and most vulnerable members." In that spirit, she spearheaded **B'More for Healthy Babies**, a collective impact strategy which has reduced infant mortality by nearly 40 percent in just seven years. During that time, Baltimore City experienced the **lowest infant mortality rate on record**, and the rate for African American infants was reduced by nearly 50 percent.

Dr. Wen asserts that "**violence prevention is a key function of public health.**" To combat violence in Baltimore, she secured funding for **Safe Streets**, a program designed to treat gun violence as a contagious disease. In 2014 alone, Safe Streets workers mediated 880 conflicts, **over 90 percent of which** were deemed likely to result in gun violence.

FIGHTING TO PROTECT ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

"Anyone who has worked with Dr. Wen knows that when it comes to protecting her patients, she doesn't back down from a fight. In Baltimore, she has been a true partner in our shared mission to provide access to quality healthcare for all. She has expanded care, eliminated obstacles, and, most important of all, saved lives. Her brilliance and passion for her work shines through in everything she does. There is no question that in selecting Dr. Wen as its President, Planned Parenthood is gaining a powerful and effective advocate, and millions across this country will benefit from her leadership." - U.S. Representative Elijah Cummings

Throughout her career, Dr. Wen has fought to ensure anyone who needed it could access good medical care. She became an emergency room physician so she would never have to turn a patient away. As Commissioner of Health, she expanded access to health care and stood up when it was at risk.

- **Dr. Wen** **challenged President Trump's proposed domestic gag rule** because it prevents doctors from giving women their best health advice and dramatically reduces the quality of care for millions of women.



- **Last month, she [led a lawsuit against the Trump administration](#)** for intentionally and unlawfully **sabotaging the Affordable Care Act**, which jeopardizes access to care for thousands of families in Baltimore.
- **She [fought the Trump administration - and won - for cutting teen pregnancy prevention](#) funds**, resulting in a federal court restoring \$5 million in grant funding to Baltimore-based teen pregnancy prevention programs.
- **She stood up against the Trump administration's changes to the Title X** program to [protect funding for 23 health clinics in Baltimore](#) providing reproductive health care for low-income women.

NEVER WANTING TO TURN A PATIENT AWAY

*"My classmates were victims and perpetrators of gun violence; our friends and neighbors suffered from drug and alcohol addiction; and I saw what happens when people do not have access to health care and die from treatable problems related to poverty and disparities. Those experiences motivated me to become a physician. **I wanted to be an emergency physician because I never wanted to turn any patient away.**" - Dr. Leana Wen on how her childhood experiences shaped [her decision to become a doctor](#).*

Dr. Wen grew up in poverty and saw firsthand what happens to families and entire communities when they don't have access to health care. She views inequalities in health as one of the great social justice struggles of our time, having known neighbors who were unable to seek the care they needed, dying needlessly in too many cases.

- Dr. Wen graduated summa cum laude from California State University, Los Angeles at the age of 18. She earned her medical degree from Washington University School of Medicine before becoming a Rhodes Scholar at the University of Oxford.
- She completed her residency training at Brigham & Women's Hospital and Massachusetts General Hospital, where she was a Clinical Fellow at Harvard Medical School.
- During medical school, she was [elected president of the American Medical Student Association](#) and took a year off from 2005 to 2006 to fulfill her duties, including leading 65,000 doctors-in-training to fight for universal health and advocate for reproductive rights.

- From 2013 to 2015, Dr. Wen served as an attending physician and Director of Patient-Centered Care in the Department of Emergency Medicine at George Washington University (GWU).

IMMIGRATING TO THE UNITED STATES

Dr. Wen's experience as an immigrant shaped her belief that healthcare is a fundamental right, and also learned the value of Planned Parenthood in providing critical, lifesaving care to vulnerable communities, including immigrants and working families.

- Born in Shanghai, China, Dr. Wen was [brought to the United States](#) by her parents shortly before turning eight years old. They were granted political asylum, and became U.S. citizens in 2003.
- To make ends meet, her parents [worked multiple jobs](#) -- cleaning hotel rooms, delivering newspapers, washing dishes in restaurants -- and relied on food stamps and Medicaid.
- Dr. Wen, her mother and her sister all relied on Planned Parenthood for basic medical care at various points in their lives.
- She [grew up in Utah and California](#), where she saw neighbors and friends struggle to access health care, teaching her the impact on communities when people aren't able to access basic health care.

A NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED LEADER IN PUBLIC HEALTH

Dr. Wen is widely respected by leaders in the medical and public health community for her fierce advocacy and effective and innovative policies, aimed at expanding and protecting health care access for her patients and the people of Baltimore.

- In 2016, she was honored to be the recipient of the American Public Health Association's highest award for local public health work, the [Milton and Ruth Roemer Award](#).
- In 2017 and 2018, she received recognition as Modern Healthcare's [50 Most Influential Physician-Executives](#). In 2018, she was named a [Top 25 Minority Executives](#) in Healthcare.
- She is a fellow of the [American Academy of Emergency Medicine](#) and Academy of Medicine, and in 2017 she was named one of [Governing's Public Officials of the Year](#).