

September 6, 2019

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader Schumer and Minority Leader McCarthy:

On behalf of our nation's local governmental public health system, we write to highlight the importance of a strong Title X program to the health of communities across the country and urge you to ensure that its grantees are able to continue to serve their intended population as you negotiate fiscal year 2020 appropriations.

The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) and the Big Cities Health Coalition (BCHC) represent the nation's nearly 3,000 local health departments and 30 of the country's largest, most urban departments, respectively. These local public health departments work every day in their communities to prevent disease, promote wellness, and protect health. They convene community partnerships and facilitate important conversations with diverse stakeholders on how to create the conditions in which all people can be healthy.

One of the services provided by health departments is ensuring access to a broad range of family planning and complete preventive health services to communities through the Title X program. Title X provides access to affordable birth control, sexually transmitted infection (STI) testing and treatment, HIV testing, cancer screenings, and other preventive health services to individuals with low incomes. For nearly fifty years, the program has provided these critical services to those who need them most, including people of color, young people, LGBTQ people, immigrants, and those in rural communities who have limited access to health care services.

More than half of Title X grantees are local and state health departments. Further, health departments that are not Title X grantees work alongside the funded entities to ensure services such as family planning and STI and HIV testing (and prevention) are available in communities across the country.

Unfortunately, recent changes made by the Administration to the Title X program will limit its effectiveness and reach as Title X providers, including some governmental public health departments and their community partners, are forced to close their clinic doors. Besides

increasing burdens on patients, it is simply unworkable for many providers to physically separate their family planning services from other public health services provided to community members, including immunizations, maternal and child health services, and nutrition programs. It is even more of a burden for government agencies as separating their billing and electronic health records, not to mention administrative oversight (such as legal or accounting services), would be cost prohibitive and a waste of public dollars.

Loss of family planning services will affect the four million people annually who rely on Title X providers to meet their reproductive health needs in communities where they live. All patients, no matter their service mechanism, expect and deserve medically accurate, comprehensive information from their providers. However, the Administration's changes to the program puts that freedom of information at risk. Health departments who participate in Title X, and other providers with whom they partner, must be allowed to provide the broad range of contraceptive methods with nondirective options counseling, not withhold full and accurate medical information from patients, and provide confidential care – and do so in settings that are appropriate without overly burdensome additional regulations like those recently enacted by HHS.

The House-passed FY2020 Labor-HHS-Education (Labor-HHS) appropriations bill includes strong funding and, importantly, essential protections for the Title X family planning program by ensuring access to critical preventive care for those who get care through this program. We urge the Senate to also include these critical provisions, which have bipartisan support, in its FY2020 Labor-HHS appropriations bill and for these protections to be included in any final Labor-HHS appropriations bill negotiated between the House and Senate.

Thank you for your attention to this critical health issue. For more information, please contact Eli Briggs, NACCHO Senior Government Affairs Director at ebriggs@naccho.org/202-507-4194.

Sincerely,



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CEO
NACCHO



Chrissie Juliano, MPP
Executive Director
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