

Majority Leader Harry Reid
U.S. Senate
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Speaker John Boehner
U.S. House of Representatives
1011 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Majority Leader Reid and Speaker Boehner:

As organizations committed to winning the fight against HIV/AIDS in this country, we are strongly opposed to the elimination of Title X funding and the amendment offered by Representative Mike Pence (R-IN) that prohibits Planned Parenthood health centers from receiving federal funds to provide primary and preventive health care services to millions of Americans every year. The elimination of Title X and the Pence amendment—which passed the U.S. House of Representatives on February 18th—is political and ideological, and will result in millions of Americans losing access to essential health care services, including HIV prevention and care.

Title X grantees, including Planned Parenthood, provide comprehensive family planning and related preventive health services with priority given to persons from low-income families. Nearly three-quarters of all counties around the U.S. have at least one clinic that receives Title X funds. Planned Parenthood provides care to one-third of all Title X patients. Planned Parenthood operates more than 800 health centers across the country, serving 3 million Americans each year—the vast majority of whom have incomes at or below 150 percent of the federal poverty level. More than 90 percent of the health care services Planned Parenthood offers are primary and preventive, including HIV counseling, screening, and referrals, cancer screenings, annual exams, immunizations, and STI testing and treatment. In addition, Planned Parenthood is the largest sexuality educator in the country, helping to protect young people and adults against HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, as well as unwanted pregnancy. More than 1.2 million youths and adults participate in Planned Parenthood educational programs every year.

For many people, and especially those in rural areas and underserved communities, Title X and/or Planned Parenthood clinics are their only source of health care. In fact, 6 in 10 women who access care from a women's health center like Planned Parenthood consider it to be their main source of health care.¹ In addition, one in three women who receive HIV testing or access STI services do so at a women's health center like Planned Parenthood, including half of low-income women who received these services.² **Planned Parenthood clinics alone provide approximately 550,000 HIV tests annually.**

¹ Gold, RB et al., *Next Steps for America's Family Planning Program: Leveraging the Potential of Medicaid and Title X in an Evolving Health Care System*, Guttmacher Institute, 2009.

² *Ibid.*

The elimination of Title X would result in a crippling loss of funds for thousands of health clinics around the country. The Pence amendment, which would do nothing to reduce the deficit, would eliminate funding streams vital to Planned Parenthood's provision of affordable, quality care, including Medicaid, Maternal and Child Health program funds, evidence-based teen pregnancy prevention funds, and CDC funding for HIV screening and infertility prevention. As a result, these dangerous provisions would take away health care relied upon by millions of women, disproportionately impacting low-income women and women of color and exacerbating already unacceptable health care disparities.

Planned Parenthood and other Title X grantees are essential to providing underserved women with critical preventive services and primary care. In fact, the National HIV/AIDS Strategy, released in July 2010, specifically emphasizes the importance of integrating reproductive health care and HIV prevention, and recommends the provision of HIV care services by health care providers like women's health centers.

The Pence amendment and the elimination of Title X recklessly threaten the health of vulnerable women, many of whom otherwise lack access to critical prevention and care, during a period of historic economic instability. We strongly urge you to reject them.

Sincerely,

Advocates for Youth
AIDS Action Baltimore
Asian & Pacific Islander Wellness Center
Center for Health and Gender Equity (CHANGE)
HIV Law Project
HIV Medicine Association (HIVMA)
HIV Prevention Justice Alliance (HIV PJA)
HIVictorious, Inc.
International Women's Health Coalition
National Council of Jewish Women
National Minority AIDS Council
Physicians for Human Rights
Professional Association of Social Workers in HIV and AIDS
Sexuality Information and Education Council of the U.S. (SIECUS)
START Westminster
The AIDS Institute
The Association of Nurses in AIDS Care
Treatment Access Expansion Project