

Planned Parenthood

Planned Parenthood is one of the largest providers of health care and family planning services in the United States. Annually about 2.7 million women and men visit U.S. Planned Parenthood clinics for health care services and information. One in five women in the United States has visited a Planned Parenthood health center at least once in her lifetime. Merely 3 percent of Planned Parenthood's work involves abortions. In 2016 Planned Parenthood celebrates 100 years of service to the community. It traces its roots back to Margaret Sanger who was a pioneer in women's health advocacy.

However, pro-life groups have lobbied both federal and state governments to stop funding Planned Parenthood. Six states have enacted such proposals. But the courts have overturned these laws citing conflicts with federal law or with other state laws. The Federal Administration has provided funding where the states refuse it.

In July 2015, defunding of Planned Parenthood was brought before the U.S. Congress. This time a highly edited hidden-camera video purportedly showed a Planned Parenthood staff member discussing the sale of fetal tissue. Once again, conservative lawmakers called for Congressional investigation. They set their sights on defunding the organization and only when the video was shown to be untrue did this effort die down.

After his November 27, 2015 shooting attack on a Colorado Planned Parenthood clinic, Robert Lewis Dear claimed he believed abortions are performed there and that was why he killed three people and wounded 9 others.

By a 52-47 vote, on December 4, 2015, the U.S. Senate passed legislation to defund Planned Parenthood. The bill would also repeal the portions of the Affordable Care Act that requires employer-sponsored insurance to fund women's health services including abortions and the morning-after pill.

Planned Parenthood hasn't always been so controversial. In 1970, President Richard Nixon signed the Family Planning Services and Population Research Act into law. That law called for funding for family planning services, including contraception. The measure enjoyed broad bi-partisan support and Planned Parenthood specifically received federal funding under Title X of the Act. Of course, such funding has been controlled by the Hyde Amendment which precludes Congress from funding abortion services.

Donors to Planned Parenthood have included the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Buffett Foundation, and the Ford Foundation. Donations from some of these private donors have supported reproductive health, including abortion services.

In 2014, Planned Parenthood had total revenue of \$1.3 billion, but received only a third of its money from government grants and contracts such as Medicaid. The rest came from health services fees, private contributions, and other operating revenue.

According to Planned Parenthood, 59 percent of the group's revenue is used for health services, while non-medical services such as sex education and public policy work make up another 15 percent; management expenses, fundraising, and international family planning programs account for about 16 percent, and the remainder is held for future operations.

Abortion is clearly not the main work, despite all the political hype. Planned Parenthood health centers focus on prevention: 80 percent of its clients receive services to prevent about 516,000 unintended pregnancies a year. Planned Parenthood also provides nearly 400,000 Pap tests and 500,000 breast exams each year, critical services for detecting cancer. In addition, Planned Parenthood provides nearly 4.5 million tests and treatments for infections, including HIV testing and treatment for sexually transmitted diseases.

To reiterate, only three percent of all Planned Parenthood health services are abortion services.

Planned Parenthood has a beneficial impact on the lives of women, especially poor and women of color, who are cannot afford private care. At least half of the women in 491 counties across the country with a Planned Parenthood clinic receive their birth control there. In one-fifth of these counties, a Planned Parenthood site is the only family planning center for clients who rely on subsidized services.

Without such services, poor women must make the hard choice between food and shelter and their reproductive health. The effect on women's health should be obvious. CWA should actively support continued funding of Planned Parenthood.

Sisters and brothers, we must stand united against these attacks on women's health disguised as a fight to defund abortions. Every woman should have access to affordable and safe reproductive health care, including abortions. Attacks on Planned Parenthood are yet another in a string of attacks by politicians and special interests groups to limit women's reproductive rights. We must stand against this erosion of women's rights and call on Congress to continue funding Planned Parenthood!