

For Immediate Release

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Washington, DC - Last month, Texas finalized its plans to prohibit certain reproductive health care providers, such as Planned Parenthood, from participating in the state's Medicaid Women's Health Program. The move violates the freedom of choice provisions in federal Medicaid law, which allow low-income women to obtain family planning services and supplies from any Medicaid-participating provider. In response, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services announced Friday that it would halt funding to the program until the state complies with the law.

"It is unconscionable that Texas would put \$35 million dollars in federal funding on the line to win a political game," said Emily Spitzer, NHeLP executive director. "The Administration has provided substantial funding to help over 100,000 low-income women in Texas access affordable reproductive health services, including birth control and cancer screenings. Rather than focusing on the needs of Texas women, the state has decided to put politics first - leaving thousands of women without access to continuous care."

Since 2007, the Women's Health Program has been funded through a Medicaid Section 1115 waiver, a demonstration program designed to reduce Medicaid costs by providing low-income women - who would otherwise not qualify for full Medicaid benefits - access to birth control and preventive care. Last year, with the support of Texas Governor Rick Perry, the legislature voted to prohibit any provider affiliated with an entity or facility that provides abortions, such as Planned Parenthood, from participating in the state's Medicaid program, even if that provider does not perform abortions. While states have flexibility to determine which providers qualify to participate in their programs, they cannot single out specific providers, like Planned Parenthood, for reasons that are not related to the organization's ability to provide health services.

"Governor Perry and the Texas legislature have proved that they are willing to put the health

and well-being of low income women at risk for political gain," said Susan Berke Fogel, NHeLP director of reproductive health programs. "The Women's Health Program does not pay for abortions, and none of the clinics funded by the program provide abortions. Texas - by targeting Planned Parenthood - is attempting to eliminate any provider who offers abortion services for women who need them."

Last year, the Administration warned Texas that the state was putting its funding for the Women's Health Program at risk if it implemented the new law. On Friday, HHS announced that the agency would not renew the state's 1115 waiver as the state was in violation of federal law, meaning the program will be phased out over the coming months. While Perry has claimed that he will find the money necessary to continue the program, health care advocates in the state are concerned that he will not follow through on that commitment.

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