

Why Planned Parenthood Should be Defunded

Planned Parenthood has 56 independent local affiliates that operate more than 600 centers across the country. According to Planned Parenthood's most recent [annual report](#), 41 percent (\$555 million) of the organization's revenue comes from government reimbursements and grants.

Planned Parenthood is also the nation's largest abortion provider, performing more than [320,000 abortions a year](#) – more than 30 percent of the nation's annual total.

Republicans Continue to Fund the Organization

Congressional Republicans often say they want to defund Planned Parenthood because it performs abortions. That, of course, means that the organization has been *previously* funded. And funded it has been – for years, by Republicans, most recently in the omnibus spending bill ([H.R.244](#)) to fund the government for the rest of the fiscal year that was signed into law by Trump on May 5. If Republicans, the vast majority of whom would say they are against abortion, are so opposed to Planned Parenthood because it performs abortions, then why did they fund the organization with millions of taxpayer dollars during the Bush years when they had a majority in both Houses of Congress for more than four years?

Just to clarify, the federal government does not directly fund abortions, except when it does. Congress passed the Hyde Amendment in 1976 – three years after the historic [Roe v. Wade](#) Supreme Court decision that effectively overturned most state abortion laws. It prohibits federal Medicaid coverage of abortions, except when the pregnancy will endanger the woman's life or results from rape or incest. However, it doesn't prevent the states from using their own funds to pay

for abortions, and seventeen states do provide abortions to women enrolled in Medicaid. Conservatives argue that because the federal dollars given to abortion providers such as Planned Parenthood are fungible, no abortion provider should be eligible for Medicaid reimbursements, not even for cancer screenings, birth control, or preventive care.

This year, the Republicans have offered two bills that would restrict this spending. Both the American Health Care Act (AHCA) and the Better Care Reconciliation Act (BCRA) would cut off federal Medicaid payments to Planned Parenthood for one year (about half of Planned Parenthood patients are on Medicaid) and prohibit most consumers from using tax credits to help buy insurance that includes coverage for abortions.

The bills don't actually mention Planned Parenthood. What they do say is that

for the 1-year period beginning on the date of the enactment of this Act, no Federal funds provided from a program referred to in this subsection that is considered direct spending for any year may be made available to a State for payments to a prohibited entity, whether made directly to the prohibited entity or through a managed care organization under contract with the State.

The bills define a "prohibited entity" as "an entity, including its affiliates, subsidiaries, successors, and clinics"

(A) that, as of the date of enactment of this Act –

(i) is an organization described in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 and exempt from tax under section 501(a) of such Code;

(ii) is an essential community provider described in section 156.235 of title 45, Code of Federal Regulations (as in

effect on the date of enactment of this Act), that is primarily engaged in family planning services, reproductive health, and related medical care; and

(iii) provides for abortions, other than an abortion –

(I) if the pregnancy is the result of an act of rape or incest; or

(II) in the case where a woman suffers from a physical disorder, physical injury, or physical illness that would, as certified by a physician, place the woman in danger of death unless an abortion is performed, including a life-endangering physical condition caused by or arising from the pregnancy itself; and

(B) for which the total amount of Federal and State expenditures under the Medicaid program under title XIX of the Social Security Act in fiscal year 2014 made directly to the entity and to any affiliates, subsidiaries, successors, or clinics of the entity, or made to the entity and to any affiliates, subsidiaries, successors, or clinics of the entity as part of a nationwide health care provider network, exceeded \$350,000,000.

But, the bills don't block the millions in [Title X](#) family-planning funds Planned Parenthood receives annually.

Naturally, the president of Planned Parenthood opposed the bills. [Cecile Richards](#) said in a statement, "Slashing Medicaid and blocking millions of women from getting preventive care at Planned Parenthood is beyond heartless. One in five women in this country rely on Planned Parenthood for care. They will not stay silent as politicians vote to take away their care and their rights." [She](#) also termed the proposed legislation "the worst bill for women's health in a generation."

Let's Pursue a *Real* Defunding Effort

Planned Parenthood should certainly be defunded, but not because it performs abortions or does anything else that conservatives don't like.

There are three simple reasons why Planned Parenthood should be defunded.

First of all, the Constitution nowhere authorizes the federal government to fund private organizations or businesses that provide services. Here is something that Democrats and Republicans, liberals and conservatives, pro-choicers and pro-lifers should all be in perfect agreement on.

Second, it is an illegitimate function of government to take money from individuals and businesses through taxation and transfer that money to organizations or businesses that provide services – even to nonprofits, even to organizations that don't perform abortions, and even to businesses that provide important services. Businesses should charge for all services they provide and organizations that provide free or low-cost services should be funded by private grants and individual donations. If businesses can't get enough customers and organizations can't get enough grants or donations, then they should close.

Third, if it is okay for a private organization or business to receive government funds for providing family planning, STD testing, or cancer-screening services, then no logical argument can be made against a private organization or business to receive government funds for providing pest-control, auto-repair, hairstyling, house painting, or landscaping services.

It is not just Planned Parenthood that needs to be defunded. All organizations and businesses on the federal dole should be defunded.

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