

Nicole Clegg Testimony
Spotlight Hearing on Birth Control
July 16, 2025

Good afternoon, thank you Senator Markey and Representative Fletcher for having me here today to speak about the attacks on birth control and the critical role of Planned Parenthood health centers. My name is Nicole Clegg, and I am the CEO of Planned Parenthood of Northern New England, which serves more than 32,000 patients annually through 14 health centers across Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont.

Contraception is a key component of reproductive health care. The decision about whether, when, or how to become a parent is one of the most important life decisions we make. Contraceptives can also help alleviate symptoms of debilitating periods, prevent the risk of cysts, and lessen risk of endometrial and ovarian cancers.¹

Birth control is essential health care. Access to it is necessary and popular. Nearly nine in 10 women of reproductive age have used contraception, and nearly nine in 10 adults agree that everyone deserves access to the full range of birth control methods — no matter who they are, where they live, or their income.²

Last year, Planned Parenthood Members nationwide provided 2.2 million birth control services to patients. For over a century, Planned Parenthood has been dedicated to providing and fighting for birth control access. Today, family planning providers are navigating increased demand for services following the U.S. Supreme Court decision to eliminate the constitutional right to abortion and the elections of President Donald Trump.³ To be clear: our patients are worried that politicians and judges, not their trusted medical providers, are deciding whether they can access birth control that is right for their needs. I'm here to tell you their concerns are valid.

We knew opponents were never going to stop at overturning *Roe*, and this month, we saw the latest attack on reproductive health care become law. As you know, Republicans in Congress passed President Trump's reconciliation bill to "defund" Planned Parenthood by prohibiting member organizations from receiving reimbursements for the non-abortion sexual and reproductive health services we provide to Medicaid patients, just as other providers do.

I need you to understand the impact of this devastating policy on our patients. For many, we have been their trusted provider for years, even decades. They have disclosed trauma and sexual assault. They have sought help because their relationship is unsafe. We have held their hands when they suffered a miscarriage. We have connected them with specialists when we suspected cancer. We have provided them with the birth control that is best for them. We have

¹ <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/birth-control/birth-control-pill/what-are-the-benefits-of-the-birth-control-pill>

² <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nhsr/nhsr062.pdf>

³ <https://www.plannedparenthoodaction.org/planned-parenthood-maine-action-fund/press-releases/after-election-planned-parenthood-of-northern-new-england-sees-spike-in-demand>

listened without judgment and provided some of the best care a patient can receive in the country.

This Big Ugly Reconciliation bill is part of their long-term goal to shut down Planned Parenthood health centers and ban abortion nationwide. Nearly 200 Planned Parenthood health centers in 24 states across the country are at risk of closure — the vast majority in states where abortion is protected and legal.

President Trump and his backers in Congress are putting more than 1 million patients' health at risk, including more than 8,000 patients in Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont. More than 70 million Americans rely on Medicaid for health insurance, including 16 million women of reproductive age. At Planned Parenthood of Northern New England, approximately 1 in 4 patients relies on Medicaid funds for their care. Nationally, more than half of Planned Parenthood health center patients rely on Medicaid. Prohibiting Planned Parenthood health centers from participating in Medicaid will hurt our patients, and is expected to cost taxpayers more than \$50 million dollars, according to the Congressional Budget Office.

Something else you need to know: Not every health care provider accepts Medicaid. Planned Parenthood does. And we are proud to provide care to all – regardless of a patient's ability to pay. Between our three states (Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont) Planned Parenthood of Northern New England provides nearly \$5 million in free and discounted care to patients covered by Medicaid every year. Across this country, a Planned Parenthood Member is sometimes the first and only health care provider patients see in the entire year. There is no other provider who can step in and replace the essential, lifesaving health care services Planned Parenthood provides.

At Planned Parenthood of Northern New England we have been candid about financial challenges. We operate in a health care system that does not adequately reimburse us for the care we provide. The reconciliation bill just passed by Congress, coupled with the Trump Administration's decision to withhold already appropriated Title X family planning funds earlier this year, means our organization is facing a loss of \$5 million. This is not something we can sustain.

So far in 2025, at least 20 Planned Parenthood health centers across seven states have closed or have announced plans to close.⁴ Planned Parenthood of Northern New England has closed a total of 6 health centers since 2022 and the impacts of those closures are still felt in those communities, years later with continued gaps in care. If we are forced to close additional health centers, it would have devastating ripple effects on our already fragile health care system, leading to longer wait times and increased costs for everyone, not only Medicaid patients.

People in rural states face unique barriers and already travel far distances to get the essential health care they need — this will only get worse. Over sixty percent of Planned Parenthood health centers are located in medically underserved areas, primary care health shortage areas,

⁴<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/jun/02/at-least-20-planned-parenthood-clinics-shutter-amid-political-turbulence>

or rural areas. In New England, where it can take hours to reach a health care provider, we are already seeing rural hospitals and providers close at alarming rates.⁵

Planned Parenthood of Northern New England remains committed to providing comprehensive, non-judgemental, compassionate care, including birth control, to anyone who comes to us for it. We can't do this alone. We need champions in Congress to continue fighting alongside us.

Thank you for holding this hearing and for doing all you can to protect access to essential care across the country. I look forward to your questions.

⁵ <https://www.mecap.org/blog/federal-budget-plan-puts-maines-rural-hospitals-at-grave-risk-report-shows/>