



Missouri Family
Health Council, Inc.

Building healthy foundations for Missouri families.

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**Legislature Passes Measure Blocking
Thousands from Basic Health Care Coverage**

On behalf of the 73 publicly funded family planning health centers committed to ensuring accessible family planning care for all, Missouri Family Health Council is deeply disappointed that the Missouri legislature continues to attack women's health care. The Department of Health appropriations bill (HB 10) includes a line item that further restricts which providers women can choose to receive services from if they are part of the Women's Health Services Program. This language, if enacted, would deny affordable, high-quality family planning care to thousands of Missouri women across the state.

The language included in this bill seeks to bar any agencies that provide "abortion services" from providing services through the Women's Health Services Program; however, "referral" is included within the definition of these services. The 73 Title X providers are mandated by federal requirements to offer nondirective all-options counseling to every woman that tests positive for pregnancy.

"This is a dismantling of the safety net providers in Missouri," said Tonia Stubblefield, President and CEO of Tri-Rivers Family Planning, a Title X subrecipient agency. "Taking away basic health care, like Pap smears and birth control, is most definitely not pro-life."

This language has the potential to force clients to choose between receiving care from their long-time, trusted provider, or potentially going without basic health care services, particularly in rural areas.

"Our clinic served more than 1,300 women and men in 2016 and some of them have been with us for 20 years or more," said Lucia Obergoenner, WHNP-BC, Program Director for East Missouri Action Agency, another Title X subrecipient agency. "We have amazing relationships with our clients and have watched them grow and contribute to the community, but today we worry about their health because this referral language will directly impact our ability to provide services to our clients."

"We urge Gov. Eric Greitens to veto this political language surrounding the Women's Health Services Program," said Michelle Trupiano, Missouri Family Health Council Executive Director. "This language could have unintended consequences for all family planning providers throughout the state. We hope Gov. Greitens will stand on the side of public health and protect family planning in Missouri."

The health of thousands of women depend on the accessibility of the Women's Health Services Program, and placing undue barriers on the program harms some of the most vulnerable populations throughout Missouri – women residing in areas with high infant and maternal mortality, provider deserts, and low income regions. Gov. Greitens has the power to veto this dangerous language, and we trust he will make the right decision for the 100,000+ women who depend on this program."

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About MFHC

Missouri Family Health Council's mission is to champion access for every individual to culturally sensitive, quality, sexual and reproductive health education and services. The Missouri Title X federal family planning program provides comprehensive family planning services to over 45,000 women and men annually. The Title X network in Missouri is very diverse, including federally qualified health centers (FQHCs), community action agencies, county health departments, Planned Parenthood affiliates, and some standalone family planning clinics. Title X primarily serves low-income clients, and frequently serves as the initial point of care for many patients. Title X funds are granted to MFHC through the Office of Population Affairs. Please visit www.mfhc.org for more information.