



# Missouri Family Health Council, Inc.

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## **Statement on Missouri Legislature’s Attempt to Reduce Access to Women’s Health Care**

Yesterday evening, the Missouri House adopted an amendment to HB 11 (appropriations for Department of Social Services) which could potentially negatively impact family planning providers across Missouri. This amendment, proposed by Rep. Robert Ross (R-142), seeks to bar any agencies that provide “abortion services” from receiving funds through the Department of Social Services. This amendment raises special concerns as it includes “referral” in the definition of abortion services. There is no clear-cut definition of what constitutes a referral within statute and this ambiguity could negatively impact the 71 Title X family planning providers, as well as other women’s health providers, across the state who provide high-quality, nondirective pregnancy counseling and resources.

The language included in HB11 – both in the title language and the bill itself – has the potential to prevent many Title X agencies from providing care both through the state funded Women’s Health Services Program and billing through Medicaid simply for following federal Title X regulations. The sustainability of the Title X family planning network depends on third party reimbursement from such funding sources as Medicaid and the Women’s Health Services Program because Title X only pays for about one-third of the cost for clients’ visits.

“While the legislature is attempting to prevent one provider from receiving state funds, they are casting such a wide net with their loose term of ‘abortion services,’ that almost any provider of women’s health services could be negatively impacted. Talking about abortion and providing abortion is not the same thing,” said Michelle Trupiano, Executive Director of Missouri Family Health Council. “In addition, the legislature continues to fail to understand that the agencies that could possibly be the most impacted by this language include clinics in areas with some of the highest need throughout the state, such as southeast Missouri, where the absence of family planning clinics would decimate access to care, thereby increasing infant mortality in an area that has already been hard-hit.”

For over 30 years, MFHC has been a proponent of accessible reproductive health care for all Missourians. This bill has the potential to cut Missouri’s Title X network from receiving state reimbursement and it places undue barriers on individuals seeking care – barriers that most often affect low income, underserved populations. Missouri should be expanding access to women’s health providers, not making it more difficult.

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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](http://www.mfhc.org) for more information.