

Why I Stand with Planned Parenthood

by Michael Schuenemeyer
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I hold strongly to the values that life is sacred and good, and that in circumstances when conflicting realities are present, each of us has a God-given moral responsibility to make decisions which reflect a reverence for life. These values helped to ground me when young people have come to me as a pastor for counsel concerning a host of situations, including decisions about an unwanted pregnancy. These situations are difficult and gut-wrenching, so to the best of my ability, I have sought to provide a non-judgmental, supportive presence and provide access to accurate information so they can explore options and make informed decisions based on their own values and needs. When faced with such decisions, each of us needs to be accorded the freedom and responsibility to choose.

Not everyone has access to reproductive health and services. Disparities in reproductive health and access to reproductive health services are well documented and disproportionately affect women of color. Women of color are at higher risk for adverse reproductive health outcomes, including unintended pregnancy. They have less access to a trusted health care provider, less contraceptive use, more birth control failures, and inadequate access to family planning and sex education programs. These are the very services offered by Planned Parenthood health centers.

According to the Guttmacher Institute, Planned Parenthood health centers often serve most or all of the safety-net contraceptive clients in their county. In 68 percent of counties, Planned Parenthood sites serve at least half the women obtaining publicly supported contraceptive services from a safety-net health center. 21 percent of those counties Planned Parenthood serves all of the women obtaining publicly supported contraceptive services from a safety-net health center. Almost two-thirds (64 percent) of the 19 million women in need of publicly supported contraceptive services and supplies live in counties with a Planned Parenthood health center.

The efforts to de-fund Planned Parenthood are an attack on women’s health which disproportionately and unjustly affects women of color. That is why I joined 44 religious leaders across in a letter to Congress in which says,

“As religious leaders, we urge Congress to resist efforts to deny federal funds to Planned Parenthood’s non-profit health centers, and other organizations that provide crucial reproductive health care. We ask for an end to politically motivated attacks on women’s sexual and reproductive health. We know that Planned Parenthood provides essential lifesaving services to almost three million people each year, including the most vulnerable families in the U.S. As religious leaders, we support family planning as a means of saving lives, improving reproductive and public health, enhancing sexuality, and encouraging intentional parenthood. We stand with people of faith who have supported Planned Parenthood for nearly one hundred years.”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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