Our Bodies, Our Families: Our Business.

May 24, 2018 By PWN-USA

Trump Administration's Domestic Gag Rule Would Take Away Our Right to Choose--and Our Health Care

May 21, 2018: Positive Women's Network - USA strongly condemns the Trump-Pence administration's latest attack on sexual and reproductive health, rights and bodily autonomy of low-income people, LGBTQ people and people of color in their effort to extend the disastrous global gag rule to recipients of Title X family planning program funding.

Title X is the only federal funding program dedicated to family planning and serves a large number of low-income Black and Latinx women. It provides high-quality, comprehensive family planning services, including abortion, contraception, counseling services and screening for STIs and HIV, at reduced or no cost. Under the "gag rule", Title X providers, like Planned Parenthood, who provide abortions, or who discuss abortions on their premises with clients, would be denied critical federal funding - **even if they are not using federal funds to deliver these services**. As with so many other policy decisions made or supported by this administration, low-income people, immigrants and people of color will be most adversely impacted by the domestic gag rule, as they are less likely to have private insurance and more likely to rely on federally funded clinics for reproductive health care.

The Reagan administration unsuccessfully attempted to implement a similar ban domestically. This domestic development builds on a global gag rule instituted by the Trump-Pence administration as one of their official acts in office last year--a policy which is already having catastrophic impacts on reproductive health, HIV prevention efforts and access to antiretrovirals for people living with HIV in the global south.

Comprehensive sexual and reproductive health care services are essential aspects of health care that can dramatically affect our lives. Under this rule, doctors, nurses, hospitals and community health centers across the country could no longer refer their patients for safe, legal abortion. Censoring providers this way removes the guarantee that patients will get accurate information that reflects our full scope of reproductive right and undermines the very purpose for which Title X was established -- to provide "educational, comprehensive medical and social services necessary to aid individuals to freely determine the number and spacing of their children."

Women living with HIV and women of trans experience of any HIV status already face persistent HIV-related and gender-based stigma and discrimination from providers. This rule would only

further exacerbate barriers to care and worsen communications with trusted health care professionals. Instituting the rule would not only be pernicious and unjust, it undermines ethical and medical standards for informed consent that require providers to advise patients on comprehensive medical services that are safest and in their best interest.

While this rule is ostensibly about abortion, as with the global gag rule, its effects will result in limiting STI and HIV testing and treatment, cancer screenings, contraception access and other important health care services as the clinics that provide them to low-income clients lose funding.

PWN-USA denounces this and all other ideologically driven policies and funding shifts designed to control or restrict sexual and reproductive agency -- especially that of low-income women, Black and brown women, immigrants and those who are undocumented by minimizing decision-making power and limiting access to necessary health care services and skilled providers.

We will never stop fighting for the rights of all people, regardless of HIV status, race, gender, income, immigration status or sexual orientation, to full bodily autonomy, including the right to safe, legal abortion and comprehensive reproductive health care. We encourage you to join us in standing up to this assault on our human rights. Submit an official comment to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) through Planned Parenthood's online form and let them know that you oppose this new rule that would force health care providers to withhold vital information and services.

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