



The People's Hearing Remarks

April 1, 2021

Thank you to Planned Parenthood Texas Votes for organizing The People's Hearing and inviting me to share a few words today from my home in Austin, Texas.

I'm here representing Every Body Texas, an organization that works to ensure that every person in Texas can access safe, unbiased, high-quality sexual and reproductive healthcare—regardless of income or identity. We do that, in part, by administering federal Title X family planning funds, supporting a network of more than 175 clinics across Texas that serve nearly 180,000 people each year. Together we've worked really hard to increase access to birth control in a state where nearly 2 million women are in need of publicly funded family planning care. But we've had to do that in the face of serious political interference at the hands of the Texas Legislature.

What has happened in Texas over the last decade serves as a cautionary tale of the deeply harmful consequences that can result when policymakers target particular family planning providers, undermining freedom of choice.

In 2011, state lawmakers made a series of funding and policy decisions that ultimately resulted in 82 family planning clinics (one out of every four in our state) closing or reducing hours, restricting access to critical reproductive health services across the state.

The intended target was family planning providers that also provide abortion services or affiliate with abortion service providers—Planned Parenthood specifically. But the consequences reached much further: two-thirds of the clinics impacted were family planning providers that had no affiliation with abortion service providers, and tens of thousands of Texans lost access to services.

The evidence from Texas is overwhelmingly clear—prohibiting people from choosing where they receive healthcare services because some family planning providers also provide abortion services reduces access to healthcare and places the health of Texans at risk. And, once lost, access is difficult or impossible to reestablish. Although significant funding has been invested to bolster the weakened family planning safety net over the last decade, state-funded programs still are not serving as many individuals today as they did in 2011.

The Free Choice of Provider Act, filed by Rep. Ramos and Sen. Eckhardt, will help address one of the most significant harms to Texas's family planning safety net over the last decade—undermining free choice of provider.



On behalf of Every Body Texas and the sexual and reproductive healthcare providers that we support, we thank Rep. Ramos and Sen. Eckhardt for their leadership on this issue and strongly support efforts to ensure that the most qualified providers are prioritized for participation in Texas's safety net healthcare programs.

All Texans should have the freedom to choose where they receive sexual and reproductive healthcare services—regardless of their income, identity, or circumstances.