

**Testimony of
Planned Parenthood of Southern New England
Rhode Island Global Waiver Public Hearing**

July 17, 2013

As we noted in public comments last winter, Planned Parenthood of Southern New England applauds the Global Waiver Task Force for including apartially comprehensive Medicaid family planning program for eligible low income uninsured post-partum women. We said, at that time, that the program would have significant further benefit and could save Rhode Island's Medicaid program additional dollars if ALL eligible women up to 250% of federal poverty (not simply those who have already given birth) were able to access this program.

Family planning is generously reimbursed by the federal government: for every dollar a state spends on family planning, it gains \$9 in reimbursement. In addition to offering matching funding, this modest program would avert unintended pregnancy in a low income, uninsured population, thus saving the State the considerable cost of prenatal care, labor and delivery, particularly if even a few of those births might have been complicated, requiring costly neo- natal intensive care.

I speak this afternoon with an even more compelling reason why this program should have been expanded....something we could not have known about last January. With the passage of the State Budget last month, a huge injustice in that document is the ending of medical coverage for what we call RiteCare Parents. Nearly 6000 low income parents of children on RiteCare, (between 133 and 185% of federal poverty level) who have received health care through Medicaid in order to have consistent coverage across their families, are being required to purchase coverage beginning January 1 in the newly formed RI Health Benefit Exchange.

Experts in Medicaid coverage issues make it clear that:

1. Parents who lack coverage themselves are less likely to maintain coverage and to seek routine preventive health care for their children.
2. Parents at this income level are highly unlikely to be able to afford the premiums and copayments that will be required by even the most modest plans offered in the Exchange.

Had the Global Waiver Task Force adopted the FULL family planning expansion at our urging, many RiteCare parents facing this situation would, at least, have had coverage for full family planning services. Had the General Assembly adopted the family planning expansion budget language provided by Governor Chafee, this important program which is estimated to cost Rhode Island no more than \$150,000, thanks to the 9-1 federal match, could have been put in place to protect these parents.

We urge Rhode Island policy makers to think about the "penny wise-pound foolish" consequences of ending coverage for RiteCare parents. A family planning expansion offered to all uninsured women up to 250% FPL could have at least been a safety net for these struggling women and their families. As it is, Rhode Island will be left paying the considerable costs of the unintended pregnancies sure to result.

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