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Women and Teens Health Endangered by Special Session
Missouri Legislature passes bill to isolate teens from trusted adults

SEPTEMBER 14, 2005 (Jefferson City, MO) - The Missouri Legislature today passed the Health Endangerment Bill (SB 1), which will discourage teens from speaking to trusted adults during times of crisis. This bill may also force a women's healthcare provider in southwest Missouri to close -- leaving thousands without access to birth control, or safe and legal abortion services.

"This legislation is morally bankrupt. The Legislature says it wants to reduce abortions, but instead it ignores proven prevention programs and puts women's health and safety at risk," said Peter Brownlie President and CEO of Planned Parenthood of Kansas and Mid-Missouri.

SB 1 creates penalties for trusted adults - including family members, teachers, mentors, counselors, clergy members or health care providers - who "cause, aid or assist" a young woman who - for good reason - can't involve a parent in her decision to have an abortion. This can include the simple act of giving basic information to teens.

"Parents want their teenagers to be safe. As a parent, I'm particularly worried about the teens who don't have someone guiding them and looking out for them," said Lise Saffran, mentor of pregnant and parenting teens. "This bill puts the government between teens and a trusted adult."

The Missouri House and Senate have refused to take up the Prevention First Act sponsored by Senator Joan Bray and Representative Robin Wright Jones, which would expand access to proven prevention programs like family planning, emergency contraception and comprehensive sex education.

"If the Governor and anti-abortion legislators truly want to make abortion rare, they would focus on expanding access to family planning, emergency contraception and comprehensive sex education." said Paula Gianino, President and CEO of Planned Parenthood of the St. Louis Region. "Instead, Governor Blunt closes women's health facilities that provide birth control. This makes no sense whatsoever."

Planned Parenthood of Kansas and Mid-Missouri and Planned Parenthood of the St. Louis Region are preparing to immediately file a lawsuit against the new law in the State Circuit Court in Jackson County.

"We are concerned about the health and safety of teens and for all women in Missouri and Planned Parenthood pledges to will do everything we can through the courts to challenge this law," Gianino said.

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Planned Parenthood affiliates in Missouri provide comprehensive reproductive health services to more than 80,000 individuals throughout the State each year. Planned Parenthood's educational programs and resources annually assist tens of thousands parents, students, clergy, social workers and health care professionals.

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