



## **Planned Parenthood of the Heartland, Planned Parenthood Foundation and ACLU of Arkansas File Suit on behalf of Patients to Protect Care in Arkansas**

Advocates rally in the capitol in support of Planned Parenthood and women's health

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**Little Rock, AR** – Today, as women's health advocates rallied in the Capitol, Planned Parenthood filed suit in court to protect Arkansas women and men's access to birth control, lifesaving cancer screenings and other preventive health services. Planned Parenthood and three patient co-plaintiffs today asked a federal court to overturn Governor Asa Hutchinson's [illegal efforts](#) to block patients from accessing care at Planned Parenthood of the Heartland through Medicaid. If the court does not step in, Planned Parenthood patients who access health care through Arkansas' Medicaid programs could lose access to their trusted health care provider — and possibly these essential services altogether. This came as women and men from across the state gathered in Little Rock and delivered a petition with more than 900 signatures calling on Gov. Hutchinson to put politics aside and protect women's access to care at Planned Parenthood.

One of Planned Parenthood's patient co-plaintiffs — who requested anonymity because of her desire not to have the private and personal nature of her care made public — wrote in her public declaration for the court: "I have a two-year-old son. I work for a family business with my mom and step-dad; however, the business is not able to provide health insurance.... I rely on Planned Parenthood for my annual physical, breast exams, and birth control. Currently I am using hormonal contraception, which I need both for birth control and for help with my severe cramps and history of ovarian cysts ... Planned Parenthood is my only medical provider; I don't have a general physician. If I could no longer get reproductive health services at Planned Parenthood, I do not know where I would go or what I would do.

“There is already an enormous unmet need for health care across Arkansas. There are more than 200,000 women in need of affordable family planning care in Arkansas, and Arkansas has one of the highest teen pregnancy rates in the nation. By attempting to cancel Planned Parenthood's contract, Governor Hutchinson is blocking women and men from care at Planned Parenthood health centers,” said **Suzanna de Baca, CEO of Planned Parenthood of the Heartland.**

“Women and men who come to Planned Parenthood for care aren't here to make a political statement — they are here to get quality care from a provider they know and trust.”

“The federal government has clearly stated that Medicaid patients, not the state, have the right to choose the provider they want to deliver their family planning and other healthcare – including Planned Parenthood,” said **Rita Sklar, executive director of the ACLU of Arkansas,** which is representing Planned Parenthood of the Heartland in the suit. “This is yet another attempt by the State of Arkansas to interfere in women's personal, private health care decisions.”

Hannah Radecki, a former Planned Parenthood patient and a second-year medical student joined women's health advocates in the Capitol today. She turned to the high-quality, compassionate care of Planned Parenthood when she wanted to get birth control in a new city and didn't have an established relationship with a provider. “Planned Parenthood was the first place I thought of and trusted for birth control and reproductive health care.”

“Governor Hutchinson has no business telling women in Arkansas where they can and cannot go for cancer screenings, birth control, HIV tests and other care. Politicians in Arizona and Indiana have tried — and failed — to do the same thing,” said **Cecile Richards, president of Planned Parenthood Federation of America.** “It's insulting, it's outrageous, and it's exactly why we're fighting in Arkansas, Alabama, Louisiana, in Congress, and anywhere there are efforts to block our patients from accessing the care they need.”

Planned Parenthood has two health centers in Arkansas, located in Little Rock and Fayetteville. In a single year, Planned Parenthood health centers in Arkansas provide approximately 4,400 patients high-quality reproductive health services including well-woman exams, lifesaving cancer screenings, testing and treatment for sexually transmitted infections, HIV testing and risk reduction counseling, a full range of FDA-approved birth control methods, pregnancy testing and options counseling, and other preventive health services; and a significant proportion of these patients in Arkansas receive this care through Medicaid.