March 17, 2016

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services
and Education
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services
and Education
156 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

As you begin work in the FY 2017 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill, we urge you to include $327 million for the Title X family planning program. This will allow Title X health centers to continue their important role in our health care safety net – providing family planning and preventive health services to millions of low-income American women and families.

Title X is the only federal program dedicated to providing family planning services for low-income families. Every year, Title X provides basic primary and preventive health care services such as Pap tests, breast exams, and HIV testing, to more than 4.1 million low-income women and men at more than 4,100 health centers each year. Seventy percent of all Title X patients live at or below the federal poverty level, meaning they earn less than $11,700 per year, and six out of ten women who receive care at a Title X-funded health center consider it their primary source of care.

According to a recent study published in the American Journal of Public Health, Title X would require $737 million in 2016 to be able to serve all low-income women in need of subsidized family planning care. The current budget of Title X falls well short of that, and since 2010, funding for Title X has been cut or flat-funded. While we appreciate the effort to maintain the program’s funding level in last year’s bipartisan bill, especially given that the House proposed to gut Title X and defund it entirely – making cuts to this program is not a viable option for the program’s sustainability.

Budget cuts over the past six years have resulted in health centers being forced to scale back hours or limit services, lay off staff, and even shutter their doors – all under Congress’ watch. These harmful cuts have resulted in 1.1 million fewer patients being able to access quality services from the Title X network in just a four-year period. Adequately funding the Title X family planning and preventive health program will help restore and expand access to essential family planning services used by millions of women and men across the country.
We should not be turning our back on this critical program that so many men and women rely on for critical health care services. Funding Title X is not only the right thing to do, it is also the fiscally responsible thing to do – every dollar invested in Title X saves more than seven dollars in Medicaid-related costs. Congress should protect families – and that means preserving access to family planning for every American in need.

We ask that you protect this critical program and support the health needs of millions of women and men by providing $327 million in FY 2017 for the Title X program. We thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Barbara Boxer
United States Senator

Brian Schatz
United States Senator

Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator

Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator

Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator

Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

Christopher Murphy
United States Senator

Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator
Patrick Leahy
United States Senator

Bernard Sanders
United States Senator

Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator

Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator

Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

Tim Kaine
United States Senator

Robert Menendez
United States Senator

Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator

Martin Heinrich
United States Senator

Michael Bennet
United States Senator
Bill Nelson
United States Senator

Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

Jon Tester
United States Senator

Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

Al Franken
United States Senator

Joe Donnelly
United States Senator

Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

Maria Cantwell
United States Senator

Ron Wyden
United States Senator

Gary C. Peters
United States Senator