
Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon

March 23, 2020

Chair Roblan, Chair Holvey, and Members of the Joint Special Committee on Coronavirus Response,

Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon (PPAO) wants to express our gratitude and appreciation to the Joint Special Committee on Coronavirus Response for your time and commitment to addressing the needs of Oregonians in the time of this pandemic. We are grateful for the continued leadership of Governor Brown, the Legislature, our state agencies, and local leaders in curbing the growth of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic and shoring up our healthcare system's capacity to save lives. PPAO also thanks the Joint Special Committee on Coronavirus Response for thoughtfully reviewing, debating, and triaging all the facets of the state's COVID-19 response, including buttressing the healthcare system and its capacity to fight the pandemic; exploring mechanisms for economic, social, housing, and food relief for individuals and their family ; and thinking forward towards economic preservation and small-business support.

These are our current top priorities at a glance:

- Reimbursements for telemedicine visits should be at the same level as face-to-face visits as we move as much as possible to tele-health visits.
- Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) access. Safety net providers, such as family planning providers (or essential community providers as defined under the ACA) must be eligible for personal protective equipment for all health care workers
- Emergency funding and support for non-profits and workers

Planned Parenthood health centers are critical medical providers in the communities we serve—often functioning as the primary or only provider for many patients that come through our health center doors. Closing those doors or limiting health services, particularly during this unprecedented time, would have significant impacts on the health and well-being of these communities, including immediate and long-term consequences on rates of breast cancer, cervical cancer, sexually transmitted infections, and unplanned pregnancies. Planned Parenthood health centers across Oregon remain open and are seeing and treating patients. These health centers have rescheduled and delayed non-urgent and routine care, such as annual exams, to preserve personal protection equipment (PPE) and focus on more urgent health care, including providing essential health services like medication and surgical abortions that are both critical and time-sensitive. The leadership of our healthcare affiliates is working around the clock to maintain services, adapt, and contribute to flattening the curve of the pandemic as immediately as possible.

Our top priorities at this time are as follows:

1. Telemedicine and Remote Health Services:

- a. Coverage and reimbursement parity for telemedicine services across all state-regulated health plans. Coverage parity is important, but we also need to ensure that all telemedicine services, including those provided over the telephone, are reimbursed at the same level as in-person visits.
- b. In order to maximize the provider network available for telemedicine, we encourage you to consider getting rid of the in-network and out-of-network provider distinction to ensure patients are able to connect with a provider of their choosing as quickly as possible.

- c. Allow for new patients to be eligible and covered for telemedicine services, both audio/video and telephonic.
2. **Personal Protection Equipment (PPE):** As with countless other providers and hospitals across the state, Planned Parenthood health centers are grappling with a shortage of PPE, but will continue to provide essential reproductive health care for as long as they can. Where possible, the health centers are transitioning services to telemedicine to maintain and expand access to care while reducing incidents of exposure for staff and patients and preserving PPE supplies. However, like most providers, our health centers are very concerned about the national shortage of PPE equipment and already lack the gowns necessary to provide our services. PPCW is triaging patients and services in order to have the required PPE to keep staff safe. We are receiving the basic PPE that we routinely order, for now. A small supply of gowns (25-50) and surgical masks are the highest need for PPE equipment. There is also the possibility of needing cleaning/sanitation supplies in the future.
3. **Emergency funding and support for non-profits and workers.** Planned Parenthood Columbia Willamette (PPCW) and Planned Parenthood of Southwestern Oregon (PPSO) are making urgent investments to support staff working remotely, changing policies to allow staff to access additional leave time to care for themselves, and their families and kids out of school. Although all health centers are currently open, we are planning for the likely scenario of loss of business both through triaging patients and visits, and fewer staff being able to work. Below is a list of priorities related to emergency funding and economic relief to non-profits and workers.
- a. Economic and financial relief for all healthcare workers impacted by COVID-19 through layoffs or furloughs.
 - i. Easy centralized information for employees who are laid off as a result of the pandemic to find other high demand work in essential services.
 - b. Emergency relief to State Service Providers and Nonprofits. Ensure economic relief for non-profits apply to healthcare providers who receive Medicaid reimbursements.
 - c. Essential Community Providers (ECPs) under the ACA should be included in new funding streams to support telehealth expansion.
 - d. All supports made available to health care workers in the hospital and primary care setting must also be available to safety net providers, such as family planning providers (or essential community providers as defined under the ACA)
 - i. Childcare access for healthcare workers that includes family planning providers like Planned Parenthood.
 - e. Focus state investments on social net for unemployed individuals along with federal investments.
 - f. Ease access and applications to unemployment, OHP enrollment.

Planned Parenthood health centers continue their commitment to working in collaboration across the health care system to mitigate the burden placed on hospitals and emergency rooms during the anticipated surge of COVID-19 patients. PPCW and PPSO are continuing critical services and supporting the state in lightening the burden on emergency rooms and hospitals by continuing care but also preserving PPE by delaying services that can be delayed or done via telemedicine.

Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon continues to work alongside coalition partners to identify possible economic and workforce solutions that are needed in our community at this time. Planned Parenthood supports addressing the variety of issues that could provide relief economically particularly to our staff and other healthcare workers on the front lines and to all workers, parents, caregivers, non-profits, and so many others who may be faced with incredible economic hardship due to the pandemic and subsequent school closures, business

closures, and bans on large gatherings. In particular we would highlight the need for support for childcare access, unemployment, housing and food security, and solutions that support those in the most need.

We would like to draw the committee's attention to letters we support or have signed onto from Non-Profit Association of Oregon, Oregon Center for Public Policy, and the coalition letter submitted by Shilpa Joshi submitted on 3/18 on behalf of a broad coalition of community organizations, labor unions and advocates.

Thank you for your consideration and commitment to making sure no one is left behind in our state's response to this unprecedented crisis. Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon looks forward to continuing to work with you on these policy solutions to serve our communities.

Sincerely,

Emily McLain
Executive Director
Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon