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REBECCA A. SEAWRIGHT
76th District



THE ASSEMBLY
STATE OF NEW YORK

CHAIR
Subcommittee on
Consumer Fraud Protection
COMMITTEES
Banks
Codes
Consumer Affairs and
Protection
Corporations, Authorities
and Commissions
Education
Judiciary
MEMBER
Legislative Women's Caucus

July 31, 2018

VIA ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION:

Hon. Alex Azar
Secretary
Attn. Family Planning
Health and Human Services
US Department of Health and Human Services
Hubert H. Humphrey Building, Room 716G
200 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20201

Ms. Diane Foley
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Populations
Affairs
Attn. Family Planning
US Department of Health and Human
Services
Hubert H. Humphrey Building, Room 716G
200 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20201

Ms. Valerie Huber
Assistant Secretary for Health
Attn. Family Planning
US Department of Health and Human Services
Hubert H. Humphrey Building, Room 716G
200 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20201

RE: HHS-OS-2018-0008, Proposed Rule for Compliance with Statutory Program Integrity Requirements

Dear Secretary Azar, Senior Advisor Huber, and Deputy Assistant Secretary Foley:

As a Member of the New York State Assembly for the 76th District, and a Member of the Bipartisan Prochoice Legislative Caucus, I strongly oppose HHS-OS-2018-0008, Proposed Rule for Compliance with Statutory Program Integrity Requirements. As an advocate for women and families, I fight with my colleagues every day for the protection of access to quality reproductive health services, removing barriers to these services, ensuring access to education about reproductive choices, and responding to any potential infringements on the legal right to reproductive healthcare throughout New York State. I

respectfully submit that this proposed rule has harmful implications for healthcare in our country.

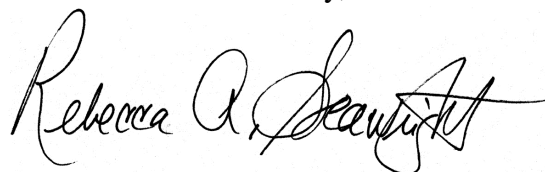
As you may know, seven in ten Americans strongly disapprove of the Trump-Pence administration agenda to take away women's basic health, rights, and freedoms. Over four million people in America rely on Title X funded services, including 306,000 New Yorkers. The need for abortion, referrals to abortion and transparency in medical treatment is critical for all women seeking healthcare services in my district. With seven medical institutions in my district, an overwhelming number of people come to the Upper East Side to seek care. New York Presbyterian Hospital's Family Planning Center and Mount Sinai Adolescent Health Center, receive Title X funding. The proposed rule would undermine the level of care these institutions are able to provide.

The proposed rule entitled Compliance with Statutory Program Integrity Requirements, published in the Federal Register on June 1, 2018 would be harmful on every level. The requirements would impose an undue burden on Title X program recipients. Funding recipients are not allowed to provide counsel or referral for abortion, effectively eliminating a physician's ability to provide care and their ethical obligation to act to promote patient health. Abortion is inherently part of a woman's reproductive health choices for family planning. Asserting in the rule that referrals for pregnancy be non-directive arbitrarily singles out abortion as directive, and therefore in violation of the law. This is logistically problematic for health care providers and harmful to patients. The rule is inconsistent with the intent and purpose of the Title X federal grant program, since its inception forty years ago.

It is disturbing that the rule will also open the opportunity for additional programs to participate which do not offer FDA-approved family planning options. Existing evidence-based medical standards and practices regulate the quality and access to services for women, and guide healthcare decision-making in the United States. Without standards, federal funding will be channeled to faith-based and other institutions which are not in agreement with approved methods for family planning, including contraception.

As a legislator and an advocate for women, it is with the highest regard for my constituents and all New York families that I respectfully submit that this proposed rule has harmful implications for healthcare in our country.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Rebecca A. Seawright". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "R".

REBECCA A. SEAWRIGHT