

May 13, 2011

Dear Members of the Texas Conference Committee on HB 1,

These are tough times for Texas—tough for our constituents and tough for those of us privileged to serve as legislators, entrusted to make sure that our government does its best for our people. Together, we face some very difficult choices that will have serious consequences for the people who elected us to represent them.

We are deeply troubled by current legislative attempts to gut the state's budget for family planning services and to dramatically decrease the number of family planning clinics eligible for funding through the Women's Health Program. These proposals, which cut \$61 million (or 60 percent) from our family planning budget and prevent funds from going to nearly three-quarters of the state's current family planning centers, are neither compassionate nor fiscally responsible. Our Catholic commitment to social justice obliges us to write today, urging you, our colleagues in the Texas state legislature, to oppose such efforts at every turn.

Family planning clinics provide essential health services to Texans from all walks of life, including many of the state's 4.3 million Catholics. These clinics are on the front lines of promoting reproductive and sexual health by helping people prevent unintended pregnancies, providing education about sexual health and avoiding sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV. They also ensure that people who want to have children get the information they need for a healthy pregnancy.

Like you, we represent Texans from different economic conditions with a range of faith beliefs or no religious belief. However, as Catholics, we believe we have a special responsibility to speak for those who have little or no voice in the political process. Especially in these difficult economic times, women, men and their families rely on family planning clinics to receive basic healthcare. Recent legislative efforts have not put the needs of poor men and women first.

If we slash funding for family planning and allow fewer centers to subsidize their services for the poorest of the poor, too many people will be left without the basic preventative healthcare services they need. A woman should not be denied the ability to plan when and whether to have children simply for the "crime" of being poor, young, a woman of color, an immigrant, or for living in a rural area. It is these women who most often rely on family planning centers as their sole sources of healthcare. It is these women and their families who will disproportionately bear the brunt of cuts and dramatic scaling back of family planning services.

We stand ready to work together to find real solutions to the economic issues challenging our state while also protecting those who most need us to represent their interests. This should not be such a difficult choice. Preserve family planning. It's good for our constituents and good for our economy. In short, it is good for Texas.

Respectfully,

Senator Jose Rodriguez (D – 29)  
Representative Roberto Alonzo (D – 104)  
Representative Rafael Anchia (D – 103)  
Representative Jessica Farrar (D – 148)  
Representative Marisa Márquez (D – 77)  
Representative Eddie Rodriguez (D – 51)

Senator Leticia Van de Putte (D – 26)  
Representative Carol Alvarado (D – 145)  
Representative Joaquin Castro (D – 125)  
Representative Roland Gutierrez (D – 119)  
Representative Ruth Jones McClendon (D – 120)  
Representative Armando Walle (D – 140)

cc: Members of Senate Finance and House Appropriations Committees

*This letter was drafted and coordinated by Catholics for Choice. For further information regarding this effort, please contact Sara Hutchinson, Domestic Program Director, at 202-986-6093.*