
National Association of Social Workers

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DATE:

TO: Senate Finance

RE: In Support of S-0391 Family Planning Coverage

For over 25 years, I worked with at-risk, poor youth and young adults. During those years, many of the biggest heartaches and life changing events were connected with unplanned pregnancies. The numerous risk factors prior to pregnancy and the devastating affects of poverty faced by these young women and young men during their most formative years, between ages 14 - 28, can not be underestimated. For many, the additional responsibility and impact of an unplanned pregnancy had life long negative consequences on themselves, their family, and community. Although some young people somehow have found the strength to endure and overcome, many faced a lifetime of potential that was wiped out because they did not have access to effective family planning services before and after becoming pregnant. It is not that these young people did not necessarily become loving and good parents, it is that their life was radically altered in ways that were not helpful to them or their family systems. We can educate as much as possible, however if services are not available, then much of this work goes to the wayside.

From my professional experience, the picture that is painted when effective family planning is not available, can be very stark. Depression, poverty, and most significantly....loss of hope can result. For some, real human pain is often the result of lack of family planning services which also often contributes to the potential of high school drop out rates and life long proverty. Why risk these devastating consequences is the paramount question.

The Affordable Health Care Act is not going to solve the problem of getting these services to young women and young men when they need it. Changing Rhode Island's eligibility up to 250% of the federal poverty level, which is woefully inadequate to begin with, will provide a safety net for young women and young men who need preventive services as well as services after an unplanned pregnancy occurs.

Respectively Submitted,



Richard N. Harris, LICSW
Executive Director