Gov. Perry: Texas Stands Ready to Implement State Women’s Health Program

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Gov. Rick Perry and Texas Health and Human Services Executive Commissioner (HHSC) Kyle Janek, M.D. announced that the state-funded Texas Women's Health Program (WHP) is ready to begin providing preventative health screenings and services to thousands of low-income Texas women, while fully complying with Texas state law. They were joined by Texas lawmakers at Lone Star Circle of Care at Lake Aire Medical Center, a qualified provider participating in the Texas WHP.

"Earlier this year, the Obama Administration, which is one of Planned Parenthood’s biggest supporters, said they would pull funding from the Women's Health Program and in response, I promised the women of Texas that they would continue to have access to this important health care, whether funded by the federal government or the state," said Gov. Perry. "HHSC has been working to line up providers across the state for the new Texas WHP, a program that not only meets the needs of Texas women, it also respects life and honors the will of Texas voters, ensuring no taxpayer money goes to abortion providers and their affiliates."

As the federally funded program continues to wind down, the state stands ready to implement the state-funded program should the federal government pull the funding or the courts, in a final judgment, require HHSC to violate Texas law. The Obama Administration has indicated they will not fund this program past Dec. 31, 2012.

"We remain committed to enforcing state law, maintaining the Medicaid funding that is rightfully ours, and making sure women have access to family planning services," said Texas Health and Human Services Executive Commissioner Kyle Janek, M.D.

Texas law prohibits tax dollars from funding abortion providers and their affiliates in the Women’s Health Program. To ensure thousands of Texas women continue to receive the preventive health services provided by the WHP, Gov. Perry directed HHSC to continue the program using state funds, while fully complying with state law.

Gov. Perry made clear Texas law will not allow a program that includes abortion providers or their affiliates like Planned Parenthood to be providers in the program, stating that any lawsuit filed to challenge the Texas WHP will kill the program, and would be responsible for denying these important health services to the low-income women of Texas. Such a lawsuit would only confirm
that rather than be excluded from the program, they would rather see no
woman benefit from it, and additionally that their own business interests and
pro-abortion agenda are more important than the women they claim to care
for.

First implemented in 2007, the Women's Health Program is a Medicaid waiver
program that provides preventative health care to more than 100,000
low-income Texas women, including screenings for breast and cervical cancer,
diabetes and hypertension, among other services.

Under federal law, state leaders are left to administer the program and set
criteria for who is considered a qualified provider. Consistent with state and
federal law, the Texas Health and Human Services Commission has
developed the program to ensure continued access to care by qualified
providers across Texas.

For more information about the WHP, please visit
www.texaswomenshealth.org.

To view the governor's remarks, please visit http://governor.state.tx.us
/news/speech/17817/.
Before we get started, I'd like to send all of our thoughts and prayers to those who have been affected by Hurricane Sandy back east and throughout the Midwest.

As always in these situations, it's the brave first responders who really make the difference between life and death for so many, and America is blessed to have such individuals in our midst.

Texas stands ready to contribute any assets necessary to help out in the relief effort.

This morning, we are here to talk about the Women's Health Program.

For several years, this program has been providing low-income women in Texas with important preventative health services and screenings.

The Texas Legislature, as the elected representatives of the people of Texas, have made it crystal clear that this important program will not be used to give taxpayer dollars to abortion groups and affiliates like Planned Parenthood.

This law reflects the clear values of our state.

In Texas, we cherish innocent life, and we won't allow taxpayer money to be used to promote or provide abortions through the Women's Health Program.

Earlier this year, the Obama Administration, which is one of Planned Parenthood's biggest supporters, said they would pull funding from the Women's Health Program.

In response, I promised the women of Texas that they would continue to have access to this important health care, whether funded by the federal government, or the state.

We're here this morning to announce the new Texas Women's Health Program is ready to go, and also to reassure women across the state that they can, and will receive services.

Commissioner Janek and his team at HHSC have been working to line up providers across the state for Texas' state-funded WHP, and I'm proud to say we now have 3,000 qualified providers ready and able to supply preventative care and screenings through the Texas Women's Health Program.
That's 500 more providers than we had earlier this year in the federally funded program.

We've created a program that not only meets the needs of Texas women, it respects life, honors the will of Texas voters, and ensures no taxpayer money goes to abortion providers and their affiliates.

I'd like to ask Commissioner Janek to give us a little more detail about the Texas WHP. Commissioner?

[JANEK SPEAKS]

Thank you, commissioner.

The program you've discussed is one that ensures Texas women get the preventative services they need, but also complies with the rule of law.

It is my hope that those who will be excluded from participating in the Texas program because of their support of abortion will set aside their objections, end the scare tactics, and focus on what's truly important: helping these patients get the services they need.

The women in this program should be able to count on them to help spread the word about where they can continue finding these services, and to that end, HHSC has supplied brochures and information that will help patients find qualified providers.

Planned Parenthood should respect the will of Texans and stop pursuing court battle after court battle.

Let me be very clear, Texas law will not allow a program that includes abortion providers or their affiliates like Planned Parenthood to be a provider.

If they file a lawsuit challenging the Texas program, and were they to prevail, they would kill this program, and they would be responsible for denying these important health services to the low-income women of Texas.

Such a lawsuit would only confirm that, rather than be excluded by this program, they would rather see no woman benefit from it.

It would also confirm that their own profits and their pro-abortion agenda are more important than the women they claim to care for.

We certainly don't doubt that the WHP funding was vital to their business interests.

Already, one Planned Parenthood clinic in Abilene where abortions were performed has been shuttered because Texas made a stand.

According to Planned Parenthood itself, that closing was a direct result of the clinic losing WHP dollars, even though the funding was supposed to go to clinics where abortions weren't performed.
The program we have ready to go will provide access to health care across our state to women who need it because we made a commitment not to leave them behind.