



FY25 Budget Joint Public Hearing
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Planned Parenthood of Northern New England provides affordable, comprehensive reproductive and sexual health care to more than 16,000 people in Vermont at seven health centers located in Burlington, Williston, St. Johnsbury, Barre, White River Junction, Rutland, and Brattleboro, and virtually through our telehealth program.

People turn to us for affordable, high-quality care including wellness exams, birth control, STI testing and treatment, cancer screenings, abortion care, as well as a variety of primary care services. As one of the most rural states in the country, we are often the only provider someone sees. We have expanded our telehealth and mental health services to meet the growing needs of our patients. We see everyone who comes to us regardless of their ability to pay, and 54% of our patients have low incomes (defined as less than twice the Federal Poverty level). Last fiscal year, we provided \$802,000 in free and discounted care to our communities in Vermont.

As a mission-driven health care provider, we fundamentally believe everyone should be able to access affordable, high-quality sexual and reproductive health care in their communities, no matter where they live or how much money they make. The reality is that ensuring our patients have access to this essential and sometimes life-saving health care is getting harder for us. As this Legislature and Vermont voters were voting to codify access to reproductive health care into our constitution, Planned Parenthood of Northern New England was forced to close 5 health centers across the state (Newport, St. Albans, Bennington, Middlebury and Hyde Park) because we could no longer financially support them. While our right to reproductive care in Vermont is the most protected it has ever been and others are looking to us as the model of reproductive access and care, the sad reality is that our access to that same care is the lowest it has been in recent memory.

Even with the generous support of our donors and our federal and state grant funding, we are looking at a \$3.9 million deficit in our 2024 budget. We have a plan to get us to a sustainable place and we fully believe that it's possible to turn around our financial situation but to do that we need time and additional resources. We are currently working with the legislature and DVAH on implementing more equitable Medicaid reimbursement rates and expect this to be a critical component to our financial stability moving forward. However, these rate increases will take some time and there are critical gaps that need to be filled in

the meantime that are forcing us to make tough choices about the capacity of the care we can provide.

I'm here today to respectfully request \$500,000 for our health centers so that we can continue to provide these essential services to people in Vermont.

Our patients—our neighbors—are in need of support like never before. The care we provide helps empower patients to protect their health and control their reproductive lives - making it easier to finish school, pursue career aspirations, break the cycle of poverty, raise thriving families, and contribute to a stronger Vermont community. Investing in sexual and reproductive health care makes good fiscal sense, For every dollar invested, we save \$7 in costs associated with poor health outcomes.

Our work also takes place in a post-Roe reality. Since *Roe v. Wade* was overturned and states were given the power to ban essential health care, tens of millions of people were stripped of their right to make their own personal medical decisions. Today, 1 in 3 women can no longer access an abortion in their home state and nearly 1 in 5 are traveling out of state for abortion due to bans and restrictions. At PPNNE we've seen patients travel to us from as far away as Texas and Florida to receive their abortion care.

We are committed to delivering affordable and essential health care to all who need it, no matter what.

Please support PPNNE with one-time stop gap funding of \$500,000 for our health centers so that we can continue to provide these essential health care services to all in Vermont who depend on us.

Thank you.

For more information, please contact Jessica.Barquist@ppnne.org

***Planned Parenthood of Northern New England (PPNNE)** is the largest provider of reproductive and sexual health care across the state of Vermont. We serve **patients** through 7 health centers in St. Johnsbury, Rutland, Brattleboro, Barre, Burlington, Williston, and White River Junction and virtually through our Telehealth program. Last year we saw more than 16,000 patients at these sites. PPNNE was named a 2021 Guardian of Excellence Award® winner by Press Ganey, the national leader in health care consumer and workforce engagement. Press Ganey recognizes PPNNE as a top-performing health care organization, achieving the 95th percentile or above for performance in patient experience, out of more than 20,000 medical practices.*