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March 12, 2018

The Honorable Alex M. Azar, II
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
Hubert H. Humphrey Building
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Azar:

On behalf of the physician and medical student members of the American Medical Association (AMA), I am writing to express our concerns with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services' (HHS) new grant application guidelines for Title X funding. The Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) that was released a few weeks ago makes major changes to the program's priorities, which the AMA believes will significantly reduce patient access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health care and information.

In a clear shift in priorities, the call for applications removes references to Quality Family Planning recommendations, nationally recognized clinical standards for the provision of high-quality family planning, and sexual health care services. The call for applications also removes references to ensuring access to the 18 FDA-approved contraceptive methods, including Long Acting Reversible Contraceptives, the most effective methods of birth control. Instead, for the first time, the FOA sets up a point system that favors certain characteristics, giving preference to faith-based clinics and clinics that offer "natural family-planning" services and abstinence-only counseling for teenagers. Moreover, in contrast with past years, when a group of officials approved funding for applicants, the final funding decisions will be decided by only one official.

Title X is the only federal program dedicated exclusively to family planning. Four million Americans, many of them low-income, rely on Title-X funded programs at almost 4,000 clinics to access all FDA-approved methods of contraception and other essential care, such as cancer screenings, well-woman exams, and sexually-transmitted infection testing and treatment. We are deeply concerned that the grant application changes announced by HHS will reduce individuals' options for where to access comprehensive family planning care and adversely affect the existing evidence-based standard of care for clinical services and contraceptive counseling. The AMA strongly urges you to reconsider these changes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James L. Madara". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "James" being particularly prominent.

James L. Madara, MD