

December 16, 2002

President Marvin Pratt
Milwaukee Common Council
200 East Wells, Room 205
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Dear President Pratt and the Members of the Milwaukee Common Council:

As the elected representatives of residents in the City of Milwaukee, we stand united in our support of the proposed partnership between the City of Milwaukee Health Department and Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin (PPWI).

This proposed collaboration would permit PPWI to occupy space at the Health Department's Northwest Health Center located at 7630 West Mill Rd to deliver family planning services to underserved residents one day per week. Planned Parenthood's services would be backed by a \$200,000 federal family planning grant to provide breast and cervical cancer screenings, sexually transmitted infection testing and treatment, pregnancy testing and counseling, and access to contraceptives.

The proposal is a cost-effective, commonsense approach to enhancing the health of city residents through improved access to preventative and diagnostic reproductive health care. It is critical to our efforts to improve the health and well-being of Milwaukee women and their families and will bring much-needed resources and medical services to our community.

Recent reports on the health status of our city residents make clear the importance of this innovative partnership:

- Milwaukee has the second highest teen birth rate of the nation's 50 biggest cities and continues to rank poorly in seven other key factors that determine a baby's chance of getting a healthy start in life.
 - 20.3% of all babies born in Milwaukee were born to teens
 - 60% of these babies were born to single women
 - 69% of teen births in Milwaukee were to women with less than a high school education
 - 6% of pregnant women in Milwaukee received late or no prenatal care
 - 18% of women in Milwaukee smoked during pregnancy
 - 14.5% of babies born to teens had a low birth weight(2002 Annie E. Casey Foundation)
- Milwaukee has the 10th highest rate of gonorrhea in the nation. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- Wisconsin has the second highest chlamydia rate and the 22nd highest rate of syphilis in the nation. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- In Milwaukee's 53218 zip code (where the 76th and Mill Street health center is located) there is a high rate of reported cases of chlamydia and gonorrhea. (2001 City of Milwaukee Morbidity Statistics)

- 40% of Wisconsin births to girls under 17 years of age occur in Milwaukee County. (*Birth to Teens in Wisconsin, 2001, Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services*)
- Milwaukee has posted the lowest high school graduation rates (41%) for African Americans of any state in the country for the second year in a row. (2002 Manhattan Institute and U.S. Department of Education data). One possible reason for the gap between African Americans and other groups is due to Milwaukee's exceptionally high teen pregnancy rate, second only in the county to Baltimore's. (*Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, 11-21-02*)
- The Institute for Women's Policy Research has ranked Wisconsin 48th among 50 states on a woman's ability to access basic reproductive health care services including sex education and birth control. (*The Status of Women in Wisconsin, 2002*)

The Health Department's proposed partnership with Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin would attract federal resources to provide residents with family planning and cancer screening services regardless of patients' ability to pay. In turn, this collaboration will increase our capacity to reach more people in need and will aid our efforts to reduce sexually transmitted disease, unintended pregnancy, breast and cervical cancer, and healthy birth outcomes.

This is responsive government at work. We applaud the Health Department for developing smart, cost-effective ways to promote the health of Milwaukee residents and urge the Common Council to approve this partnership.

Sincerely,

Christine Sinicki Spear Cogg

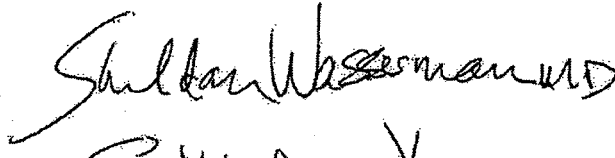


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cc: Mayor John Norquist



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