

September 29, 2015
10 a.m. – Rayburn 2154
Congressman Gerald E. Connolly (VA-11)

Committee on Oversight and Government Reform:
“Planned Parenthood’s Taxpayer Funding”

Mr. Chairman, it would be novel if today’s hearing actually focused on the subject of its title, the taxpayer funding of Planning Parenthood, yet I suspect most of this inquisition will be aimed at the small scope of Planned Parenthood’s activities that are not funded with taxpayer dollars. The Republican majority has maintained a steady drum beat of attacks against Planned Parenthood, and, in this latest salvo, it is trying to use surreptitiously-made and heavily-edited videos, coupled with graphic language and hyperbole about a research program in which just two of Planned Parenthood’s 59 affiliates participate, to provoke public outrage. It would be one thing if my colleagues were interested in providing thoughtful oversight of Planned Parenthood’s use of federal dollars to provide essential health and reproductive services for women, but the reality is this is just another attempt in their decades-long effort to overturn *Roe v. Wade* and bar access to abortions altogether.

There are no fewer than four congressional committees investigating the sensational claims made by the so-called Center for Medical Progress in these videos, and thus far, there has been not one shred of evidence to support its claims of misconduct on the part of Planned Parenthood. Apparently that is not enough to satiate the critics because the House is about to create a new subcommittee to exclusively investigate the actions of Planned Parenthood. This comes on the heels of a handful of bills brought up for vote by the House majority just this year to restrict access to abortion services and to defund Planned Parenthood. And of course, some in the majority have been using this issue as leverage in a political power struggle with Speaker Boehner over whether to force a government shutdown, which culminated in the Speaker’s resignation last week. So let’s not be deceived by the true purpose of today’s hearing. My dear friend Jim Boren, a noted humorist, used to say, “If you’re going to be a phony, at least be sincere about it.”

I would like to commend Ms. Richards for making herself available to the committee and turning over more than 20,000 pages of documentation as part of this partisan charade. Contrast that with her accuser, David Daleiden, who has not accepted an invitation from the Ranking Member to appear here today to answer questions about the Center for Medial Progress or these videos and, until last Friday, had not responded to the Chairman’s own request and subpoena for the unedited videos and documents. As of yesterday afternoon, the minority staff still had not reviewed information provided at the last minute by Mr. Daleiden. I also find it curious that the committee has shown no interest in investigating charges that Mr. Daleiden may have violated federal law in misrepresenting the Center for Medical Progress in its application to the IRS for 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status and may have violated California privacy laws in taping these conversations without the consent of Planned Parenthood staff. As I recall, this committee

has expressed great interest in the veracity of the IRS' handling of applications for tax-exempt status from other organizations engaged in political activities.

Though it may not carry much weight now, I remind my colleagues that Speaker Boehner was quoted saying, "facts first," when questioned by reporters about efforts to defund Planned Parenthood. While I respect the opposing views of my colleagues on this issue, I would say to them, you are entitled to your own opinions but not your own facts. Contrary to what some of my colleagues assert, there are no altruistic health care providers waiting in the wings to fill the gap in reproductive health care services for low-income women in some of these communities if they succeed in shuttering Planned Parenthood. The reason Planned Parenthood has become a primary provider of contraceptive services and cancer screenings, if not the sole provider in some communities, is that others in the medical field have made the business decision that it is not financially sustainable for them to do so. CBO says, "The people most likely to experience reduced access to care would probably reside in areas without access to other health care clinics or medical practitioners who serve low-income populations." The reduction in family planning services to help women avert pregnancies would actually result in a \$130 million increase in Medicaid spending to account for the growth in unplanned births. CBO also notes that some of those additional children could themselves qualify for Medicaid and other federal assistance programs, further increasing the cost.

In addition, in states like mine, where Republicans have blocked the expansion of Medicaid coverage, low income women would find it even more difficult to find health and reproductive services. In Virginia alone, seven Planned Parenthood centers offered services to nearly 26,000 patients in 2013, for which the most recent data is available. Those visits included nearly 18,000 consultations for contraception and more than 6,200 cervical and breast cancer screenings. In many cases these are patients who would otherwise go without these services if not for Planned Parenthood. Nationwide, one in five women have relied on Planned Parenthood at one point in their lives for health services.

Planned Parenthood's core services include providing birth control, breast exams, pregnancy testing, identifying and treating sexually transmitted infections, and other reproductive health services. Unfortunately, we won't hear much about the provision, funding, or availability of those services here today. Rather than look at the real health challenges and access to care facing low-income women in our communities, this hearing will attempt to use specious claims to indict one of the organizations that has stepped forward to offer critical care where the government and medical community have failed to deliver.