

April 5, 2007 - Reps. Lowey, Slaughter and DeGette Urge Leavitt to Appoint Pro-Family Planning Sec.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, April 5, 2007

Reps. Lowey, Slaughter and DeGette Urge Leavitt to Appoint Pro-Family Planning Secretary

Washington, DC - Today U.S. Representatives Louise Slaughter, Nita Lowey, and Diana DeGette urged Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Michael Leavitt to appoint a new Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Office of Population Affairs who is committed to family planning and women's health. The letter was co-signed by 30 Members of Congress.

"With all the Title X program does to give women the ability to decide how and when to start a family, we need a director with a strong backing in medical science and an equally strong commitment to family planning," Rep. Slaughter said. "This appointment is Secretary Leavitt's chance to defend the mission of Title X, reduce unintended pregnancies, promote strong families, and support women's health nation-wide."

The last appointment for this position, Dr. Eric Keroak, had previously promoted policies that were in direct conflict with the mission of the Title X program, including a refusal to distribute contraception to married women. With Dr. Keroak's recent resignation, Secretary Leavitt has an opportunity to make a positive change on family planning and women's health at HHS.

"It should go without saying that Secretary Leavitt needs to appoint a director with appropriate public health and medical credentials to head the Title X Family Planning program," said Rep. Nita Lowey (D-NY, Westchester/Rockland). "But given his previous designee's background, I feel an obligation to remind him again of what is at stake. The Title X program is absolutely critical in our efforts to reduce unintended pregnancies, and we must not only properly fund it, but ensure that the new director is committed to the stated goals and mission of the program."

The Office of Population Affairs oversees the Title X Family Planning Program, which provides high-quality family planning and preventive health care to low-income or uninsured individuals who may otherwise lack access to health care. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) included family planning in its list of the "ten great public health achievements in the 20th century."

"This is a chance for Secretary Leavitt to do the right thing when it comes to protecting the health of women from all walks of life. It is absolutely critical that the director of this important program recognize the importance of family planning in the lives of women and their families," said Chief Deputy Whip Diana DeGette (D-CO). "Title X Family Planning Program, which provides family planning services as well as other critical health services, will help us reach a goal we all share, preventing unintended pregnancies."

The complete text of the letter sent to Secretary Leavitt is included below:

April 5, 2007

The Honorable Michael O. Leavitt

Secretary

Department of Health and Human Services

200 Independence Avenue, SW

Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Leavitt:

In light of Dr. Eric Keroack's recent resignation as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Population Affairs at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), we urge you to appoint as his successor someone with both distinguished public health and medical credentials and a strong commitment to the mission of the Office and the programs it administers.

As you know, the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Population Affairs oversees the Title X Family Planning Program, which provides family planning services as well as other critical health services such as breast and cervical cancer screening, HIV counseling and screening, and pregnancy tests and counseling. Clinics receiving Title X funds provide services that reduce unintended pregnancies and the need for abortion. Furthermore, for every dollar spent on publicly funded family planning, \$3.80 is saved in pregnancy-related and newborn care cost to Medicaid.

Given the critical importance of Title X services to keeping women healthy and preventing unintended pregnancies, it is absolutely imperative that the person charged with overseeing this program have a demonstrated commitment to family planning and women's health. For this reason, we urge you to appoint a professional who is committed to ensuring

women are empowered with medically accurate information and given access to safe and effective contraception.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,

Louise Slaughter

Member of Congress

Tom Allen

Member of Congress

Susan A. Davis

Member of Congress

Carolyn B. Maloney

Member of Congress

Christopher Shays

Member of Congress

Judy Biggert

Member of Congress

Henry A. Waxman

Member of Congress

Mark Steven Kirk

Member of Congress

Diana DeGette

Member of Congress

Tammy Baldwin

Member of Congress

Howard L. Berman

Member of Congress

Rick Boucher

Member of Congress

Lois Capps

Member of Congress

Julia Carson

Member of Congress

Jim Costa

Member of Congress

Joseph Crowley

Member of Congress

Nita M. Lowey

Member of Congress

Rosa L. DeLauro

Member of Congress

Keith Ellison

Member of Congress

Raúl M. Grijalva

Member of Congress

Jay Inslee

Member of Congress

Neil Abercrombie

Member of Congress

Carolyn McCarthy

Member of Congress

Betty McCollum

Member of Congress

Jim McGovern

Member of Congress

James P. Moran

Member of Congress

Jan Schakowsky

Member of Congress

Hilda L. Solis

Member of Congress

Diane E. Watson

Member of Congress

Lynn C. Woolsey

Member of Congress

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