

CREATIVE LOAFING

Planned Parenthood moves to EAV

Staci Fox, Planned Parenthood Southeast's president and CEO, talks reproductive health in the Trump era and more

BY HILARY CADIGAN — JUNE 22, 2017



NOT GIVING UP: Planned Parenthood Southeast president and CEO Staci Fox (far right) marches in Selma, Alabama with vice president of public policy Nikema Williams (second from left) and supporters. | COURTESY PLANNED PARENTHOOD SOUTHEAST

In March 2016, a nonrenewable lease forced Planned Parenthood's Downtown health center to shut down. The only other metro health centers are located in Cobb County and Gwinnett, leaving Atlanta women in need of affordable reproductive health care with few local options.

But next month, we finally have some good news: Planned Parenthood Southeast's health center will reopen in East Atlanta Village at 440 Moreland Ave. The new center, expected to be up and running by early to mid July, will offer a full range of reproductive health care for women, men and young people — including lifesaving cancer screenings, breast health services, birth control, testing and treatment for sexually transmitted diseases, pap tests and medical abortion services.

The relocation is a victory for the organization's Southeast arm, and the many people it serves. Georgia is not exactly known for its progressive policies toward women's health (we're looking at you, Karen Handel), and under a federal administration that seems intent upon forcing us back to the Dark Ages, local victories like this are more than a little heartening.

Creative Loafing caught up with Planned Parenthood Southeast President and CEO Staci Fox via email to talk about how the organization is faring and how it'll continue to fight for affordable and accessible reproductive health care in the days, weeks and years ahead.

Why did you decide to relocate the health center to East Atlanta Village?

The decision to relocate to East Atlanta Village was evidence-based. Rollins School of Public Health graduate students from Emory University conducted a relocation analysis to identify strategic locations for the Atlanta health center. The East Atlanta site is located in an area of need for our sexual and reproductive health services and is also near public transportation and highways.

What's it like working for Planned Parenthood under the Trump administration?

From day one, this administration has targeted women's health. In May, the president proposed the worst budget for women and women's health in a generation. For the first time in history, the proposed budget singles out Planned Parenthood, and it guts programs designed to help women and their families put food on the table, get the medical care they need and make ends meet. The Medicaid cuts alone would affect millions of people: One in five women rely on Medicaid for preventative care, and it covers almost half of all births. Planned Parenthood health centers currently serve 41 percent of people accessing contraception under Title X. And although the proposal would maintain Title X funding, it renders the program ineffective by barring Planned Parenthood from participating.

In response to this administration and its repeated attacks on women's health, we are doing everything we can to educate the public and our lawmakers about the disastrous effects of this budget proposal. But here in Georgia, these attacks have been our reality for years. We fight every day to make sure our doors stay open so that we can continue to provide compassionate, nonjudgmental care for patients who count on us.

There's been some confusion over the GOP's attempts to defund Planned Parenthood. Are there any common misconceptions you can clear up?

The bill to repeal the ACA contains an extremely harmful provision that would "defund" Planned Parenthood. The word "defund" can be misleading, but what it really means is that it will prohibit people with Medicaid coverage from accessing preventive health care at Planned Parenthood health centers, including birth control, cancer screenings and STD testing and treatment. Many of these patients would have nowhere else to go for care. Those who already face barriers to accessing health care — especially people of color, people with low incomes and people who live in rural areas — would be hardest hit. Ultimately, this is a question of choice. Politicians should not be dictating which health care providers patients can and cannot see. It is a deeply personal and private decision that should be left up to the patients themselves.

After Trump was elected, there was a huge increase in private donations to Planned Parenthood and other progressive organizations. How has this affected you at a local level?

We have received unprecedented support this year, and we are so moved and inspired by the outpouring of generosity. People have volunteered — by the hundreds — to help us with patient care, administrative work and advocacy. Others have donated their hard-earned money to the cause. One woman from Washington state sent us a note saying she had worked extra hours that month and decided to contribute her overtime earnings to PPSE. We received another donation from a 16-year-old girl who attends an all-girls school in New York City. Her class recently discussed how many states have few or only one Planned Parenthood health center, and for that reason, she wanted to send us her contribution. These are just a few examples of the incredible kindness that we've witnessed. And we are especially grateful because this kind of grass-roots support will be critical as we face the uncertainty ahead.

What do you see in the organization's future?

Planned Parenthood has been around for 100 years, and we have been in Atlanta since 1964. Undeniably, that century's worth of work is paying off: Thanks in large part to improved access to contraception, unintended pregnancies and teen pregnancy rates are at historically low levels, and the abortion rate in the United States is at its lowest level since *Roe v. Wade*. With the relocation of this health center, we are protecting women's access to the provider that they've been counting on for decades. Ultimately, we plan to be around for our patients for the next 100 years, providing nonjudgmental, compassionate care — no matter what.

Planned Parenthood Southeast's East Atlanta Village Health Center opens in July 2017 at 440 Moreland Ave. More info at www.plannedparenthood.org/planned-parenthood-southeast.



JOIN THE CONVERSATION!

This site requires you to [login](#) or [register](#) to post a comment.

No comments have been added yet. Want to start the conversation?

RELATED