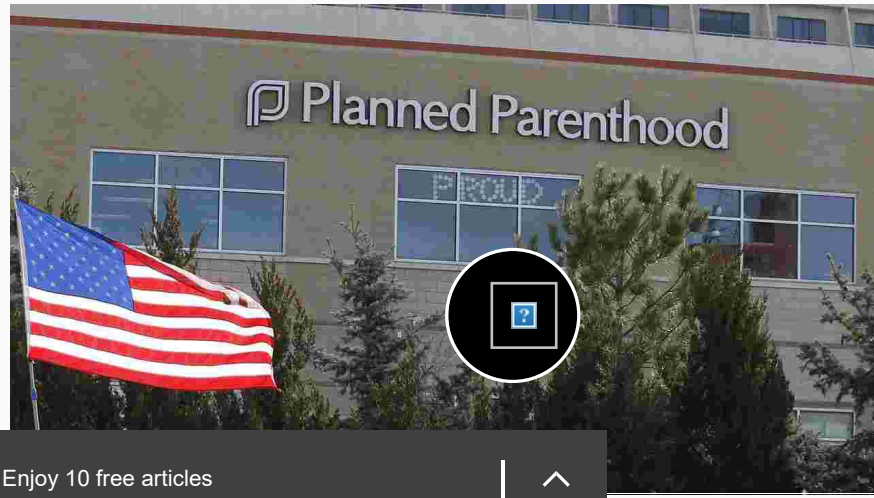




Planned Parenthood makes big money move to fight right-wing attacks

Andrew Wolfson, Louisville Courier Journal Published 7:00 a.m. ET Feb. 1, 2019 | Updated 3:15 p.m. ET Feb. 1, 2019



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id Thursday that "abortion
 Anthony Kennedy. (June 28)AP

governors, Planned
 Parenthood of Indiana and Kentucky is joining forces with its far larger and richer
 counterpart that serves the Pacific Northwest and Hawaii.

The CEO of the combined alliance said it will have more money and legal muscle to
 fight "unrelenting attempts to undo constitutionally protected rights."

The alliance will have a combined annual budget of as much as \$90 million and serve 164,000 patients at 45 health centers in six states.

Chris Charbonneau, CEO of Planned Parenthood of the Great Northwest and the Hawaiian Islands (and now Planned Parenthood of Indiana and Kentucky), said the merger is part of a conscious effort of affiliates in blue states to help patients and organizations in states that are less hospitable to reproductive freedom.

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"We are committed to getting people the sex education and birth control they need," she said. "We have a very, very generous donor base."

Charbonneau added: "Attempts to undermine our organization will be met with fierce resistance on our part," she told reporters in a phone conference announcing the alliance.

But in an interview, Margie Montgomery, executive director of Right to Life of Kentucky, said the move shows Planned Parenthood "is running scared."

Kentucky Gov. Matt Bevin lashed out on Twitter following the Friday announcement, calling Planned Parenthood the "largest purveyor of bigoted eugenics ideology." Bevin tweeted that the announcement shows Planned Parenthood is "unabashedly about money & politics, not about women's health."

Kim Greene, the former chairwoman of the Indiana-Kentucky affiliate, called the alliance "fantastic," saying it will "enable us to strengthen and expand our services in Kentucky." Greene will serve on the board of the merged organization.

The boards of both organizations unanimously approved the alliance, which will go into effect Saturday.

Planned Parenthood advocates for freedom of individual choice in sexual health and for reproductive justice. It also provides head-to-foot physicals for men and women; breast cancer screenings; all federally approved contraception; and medical and surgical abortion at some sites, but not at either of its clinics in Kentucky.

Bevin's administration has attempted to shut down Louisville's lone abortion clinic and blocked another from providing abortions, using a state law requiring providers to have written agreements with an ambulance service and hospital for emergencies. But in September, a federal judge struck down the law as an unconstitutional barrier to legal abortion. Bevin's office has appealed.

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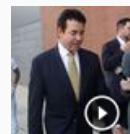
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Planned Parenthood office in Louisville (Photo: Courier Journal)

Charbonneau said the Indiana and Kentucky affiliate merged with one so far away — rather than another in the Midwest — because many of those are in the same political situation as Kentucky and Indiana.

“We felt it was important to help the mission of Planned Parenthood everywhere, not just in our neighborhood,” she said. “We have a big bank balance.”

The Northwest affiliate operates 27 clinics in Washington, Idaho, Alaska and Hawaii.

Charbonneau said conversations about an alliance began last year. The CEO of the Indiana-Kentucky affiliate, Christie Gillespie, will stay on as an adviser, Charbonneau said.

Both affiliates are nonprofit organizations that rely on contributions, and both are members of Planned Parent Federation of America.

The Indiana-Kentucky organization last year provided services to about 45,000 patients, 40 percent of whom had incomes at or below the poverty line. It provided 3,941 pap tests; 59,962 tests for sexually transmitted diseases; 139 colposcopies; 10,369 HIV tests; 12,423 pregnancy tests; and 5,611 abortions. It also provided 39,632 contraceptives, including 18,651 condoms.

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