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Planned Parenthood health center in Court Square set to open in June

timesledgernews@cnglocal.com (mailto:timesledgernews@cnglocal.com) / Tuesday, May 26, 2015 / 12:00 AM

By Bill Parry

Queens residents will no longer have to travel to another borough for sexual and reproductive health services when a new Planned Parenthood clinic opens in Long Island City next month.

Elected officials joined administrators and supporters of Planned Parenthood of New York City for a ribbon-cutting ceremony Monday at the new state-of-the-art facility, at 21-41 45th Rd. in Court Square, just steps from the No. 7 subway station.

The 14,000-square-foot patient-centered facility is named the Diane L. Max Health Center in honor of the organization's chairwoman.

"This new center is a very big step for us. It puts Planned Parenthood in every borough and keeps New York City at the forefront of reproductive health care," Max said. "The Queens center helps ensure that all New Yorkers, no matter where they live, can access the reproductive health care they need."

Planned Parenthood anticipates that the Queens facility will provide services to 17,500 clients each year once it is fully operational, including birth control, gynecological care, pregnancy tests, testing for sexually transmitted infections and abortion services. The center will employ 30 staffers and interpretation services to ensure that everyone can access the care they need, according to officials.

“We’re thrilled to be opening the doors of this beautiful new health center to the Queens community,” Planned Parenthood President and CEO Joan Malin said. “Queens represents the future of this city, and we’re so excited to be part of this remarkable borough. Come June, Queens residents will have increased access to high-quality, confidential sexual and reproductive health care services they need, regardless of their income or immigration status.”

Malin added that Planned Parenthood is expanding access to services at a time when “reproductive rights are under siege” across the country. “Astonishing” was the word U.S. Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-Astoria) used to describe the opposition in Congress.

“While other areas of the country are hurting women’s health by attacking Planned Parenthood, here in New York we recognize their crucial contributions and welcome them with open arms,” Maloney said. “We are unique. There are many places in this country where you have to get on a Greyhound bus to get the services you’ll get here.”

Planned Parenthood officials point to public health data that shows the glaring need for the new facility in Queens, where 14 percent of the population lives under the poverty line. Queens also has the highest rate of uninsured women and girls in all five boroughs and nearly 60 percent of pregnancies in Queens are unintended.

In addition, they say, many of the city’s most underserved and vulnerable residents live in Queens. For example, in western Queens, rates of HIV, sexually transmitted diseases, and teen pregnancies are among the highest in the city.

“For too many women and families, affordable, high-quality health care remains out of reach,” Mayor Bill de Blasio said. “Planned Parenthood of New York City has a long history of ensuring that New Yorkers have access to health care no matter what. This new center will help tackle health disparities and connect more New Yorkers to quality reproductive health care in their community. I join with all New Yorkers in welcoming the opening of a new Planned Parenthood health center in Queens, one of the city’s fastest growing boroughs.”

Reach reporter Bill Parry by e-mail at bparry@cnglocal.com (<mailto:bparry@cnglocal.com>) or by phone at (718) 260-4538.

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