

Another State Cuts Ties With Planned Parenthood

Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson on Friday canceled the state's contracts with Planned Parenthood, making his the third Southern state to do so since anti-abortion activists released a series of videos that they say suggests the organization sells fetal tissue.

"It is apparent that after the recent revelations on the actions of Planned Parenthood, that this organization does not represent the values of the people of our state and Arkansas is better served by terminating any and all existing contracts with them," Hutchinson, a Republican, said in a statement.

The move comes after the U.S. government has warned states moving to defund women's health group Planned Parenthood that they may be in conflict with federal law.

Planned Parenthood has come under massive criticism from Republicans and been investigated by several Republican-controlled states after the release of the videos by an anti-abortion activist group called the Center for Medical Progress.

The Arkansas contracts involved services including nurse practitioners, pharmacy and family planning and were delivered through the Arkansas Medicaid program. No state funds were used for abortions, except in the case of incest, rape or when the life of the mother was at stake.

Several conservative state legislators had urged Hutchinson to end all state payments to Planned Parenthood, citing the videos.

Federal law requires state Medicaid programs to cover family-planning services and supplies for anyone of child-bearing

age. Ending the agreements with Planned Parenthood would limit beneficiaries' access to care and services from qualified providers of their choice, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

Alabama and Louisiana, which have also sought to end their agreements with Planned Parenthood, were cautioned by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that their actions could put them afoul of federal regulations which make any qualified provider eligible to participate in the program.

Planned Parenthood, which provides healthcare services to millions of women at hundreds of centers nationwide, has denied any wrongdoing. The organization also says abortions make up 3 percent of its work.

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