TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Geoff Garin, Hart Research Associates
DATE: July 28, 2015
RE: New Polling Shows Continued Support for Planned Parenthood

From July 23 to 26, 2015, Hart Research Associates conducted a survey among a randomly selected national cross section of 800 registered voters to gauge attitudes toward Planned Parenthood in the wake the undercover videos released by the Center for Medical Progress. The interviews were conducted by telephone, including landlines, cell phones, and VOIP connections. The statistical margin of error associated with a sample of this size is ±3.5 percentage points.

Four key findings emerge from the survey:

(1) The large majority of voters favor continued federal funding for Planned Parenthood and oppose Republican proposals to defund Planned Parenthood. Voters overwhelmingly disagree with Republicans who say there should be an immediate vote to end all government funding for Planned Parenthood in light of the undercover videos released by the Center for Medical Progress.

(2) By a large margin, voters trust Planned Parenthood rather than the Center for Medical Progress with regard to the videos and Planned Parenthood’s practices on fetal tissue donation.

(3) There is significant skepticism among voters with regard to the hearings and investigations that congressional Republicans propose to hold regarding the CMP videos and the large majority of voters do not trust the Republicans in Congress to be fair and balanced in their handling of this matter.

(4) Women voters in particular have a high regard for Planned Parenthood, consider Planned Parenthood to be an important provider of healthcare services to women, and say that Planned Parenthood often is one of the few affordable healthcare options for women. Women also recognize the important role Planned Parenthood plays in preventing unintended pregnancies.

The bottom line: Americans continue to support funding for Planned Parenthood despite the debate engendered by the release of the CMP undercover videos. Voters respond favorably to Planned Parenthood’s core message about the videos and its policies with regard to fetal tissue donations, and voters are more likely to believe Planned Parenthood than CMP and its allies on this matter. Its renewed attacks on Planned Parenthood are likely to become a substantial political liability for Republicans, especially among women, because the GOP’s support for defunding Planned Parenthood is deeply at odds with the position of swing voters.
DISCUSSION OF KEY FINDINGS

(1) The large majority of voters favor continued funding for Planned Parenthood.

When asked about a proposal by Republicans in Congress to end all government funding for Planned Parenthood, including for services Planned Parenthood provides, such as cancer screenings and family planning, fully 63% of voters oppose this proposal, including 47% who strongly oppose it. Only 28% of voters support the Republican proposal to end all government funding for Planned Parenthood.

There is overwhelming opposition to the GOP’s proposal for defunding Planned Parenthood among Democrats (87% oppose) and independents (68% oppose). Only a bare majority of Republicans support their party’s position on defunding Planned Parenthood, while a significant minority stand against their party on this matter (53% favor, 34% oppose). Republican voters who do not identify with the Tea Party are divided evenly (47% favor, 44% oppose).

This issue has important electoral consequences, to the clear detriment of candidates who favor defunding Planned Parenthood. By 58% to 26%, voters say they would support a candidate who favors continued funding of Planned Parenthood over one who favors ending government funding; 16% are undecided or say the issue would not affect their vote.

In terms of movement from voters’ initial preferences for Congress, the issue creates a potential net advantage of 16 points for a pro-Planned Parenthood Democrat against an anti-Planned Parenthood Republican. Only 7% of those who are inclined to vote for a Democrat might defect to a candidate who favors defunding Planned Parenthood; by comparison, 24% of those inclined to vote for a Republican say they would support a candidate who favors continued funding for Planned Parenthood. Voters who are undecided in the baseline generic trial heat divide in favor of a candidate who supports continued funding of Planned Parenthood (55% to 16%).

Respondents do not change their views on funding for Planned Parenthood even after two questions focusing on the CMP’s undercover videos, including one question summing up the nature of the debate over the videos.
Some Republicans in Congress say that because of the undercover videos released by the Center for Medical Progress, there should be an immediate vote to end all government funding for Planned Parenthood, including for services Planned Parenthood provides, such as cancer screenings and family planning. Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the Republicans who say Congress should vote immediately vote to end all government funding for Planned Parenthood, including for services Planned Parenthood provides, such as cancer screenings and family planning?

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Fully 69% women voters disagree with the Republicans’ call for the defunding of Planned Parenthood, including 55% who strongly disagree. Four in five (79%) independent women voters oppose the Republican position, including 60% who strongly disagree.

(2) Voters trust Planned Parenthood rather than the Center for Medical Progress with regard to the videos and Planned Parenthood’s practices on fetal tissue donation.

After respondents are informed that “an anti-abortion organization called the Center for Medical Progress has released several undercover videos that show Planned Parenthood doctors discussing fetal tissue that women donate for medical research purposes after an abortion,” they were told what the two sides have to say about this matter, as follows:

The Center for Medical Progress, the anti-abortion group that made and released these undercover videos, says the videos show Planned Parenthood officials indicating their willingness to sell fetal body parts from abortions and to perform abortions in ways that would increase the likelihood that fetal tissue could be harvested.

Planned Parenthood, on the other hand, says the videos are heavily doctored and edited to deliberately distort the truth, and the unedited videos show that Planned Parenthood does not profit from the sale of fetal tissue and has strong polices in place against that. Like other quality women’s health providers, Planned Parenthood helps women who choose to donate tissue to help find cures for diseases like Alzheimer’s and sickle cell anemia.

When asked which side they would be more likely to believe in this matter, 52% say they would be more likely to believe Planned Parenthood, only 25% say they would be more likely to believe CMP, 11% volunteer they would not believe either, and 12% are not sure.
On this core question of trust, Planned Parenthood wins out among all major demographic groups and in every region of the country. Democrats believe Planned Parenthood by 78% to 4%, while rank-and-file Republicans believe CMP by a much smaller margin (53% to 24%). Independent voters side with Planned Parenthood over CMP by a 30-point margin (50% to 20%).

(3) **There is significant skepticism among voters with regard to the hearings and investigations that congressional Republicans propose to hold regarding the CMP videos.**

Republican leaders in both houses of Congress have called for hearings and investigations about Planned Parenthood in connection with the release of the CMP videos. Fifty-seven percent (57%) of voters express skepticism about the motivations of the Republican leadership in this matter, and they say the Republican leadership is seeking these hearings mainly because it has a political agenda it is trying to push. By contrast, only 28% of voters believe that Republicans are seeking these hearings because “they have legitimate concerns about Planned Parenthood and want to learn the truth.” Indeed, many rank-and-file Republican voters doubt the motivation of their GOP leadership: 32% of all Republicans, including 43% of non-Tea Party Republicans, say these hearings are to push a political agenda rather than an effort to learn the truth.

Voters also expect that any hearings on this matter organized by the Republicans will be political point-proving exercises, rather than fair and balanced. Only 25% of voters say they trust the Republicans in Congress to conduct an investigation into Planned Parenthood that is fair and balanced, while 60% say they think an investigation into Planned Parenthood will be designed more to score political points.

(4) **Women voters in particular have a high regard for Planned Parenthood and consider it to be an important provider of healthcare services to women. Candidates who back efforts to defund Planned Parenthood are very likely to alienate women voters next year.**

Among women voters, positive attitudes toward Planned Parenthood outnumber negative perceptions by two to one. Overall, 52% report positive feelings and 27% report negative feelings; 18% are neutral and 3% are not sure.

Twenty-three percent (23%) of women voters say they personally have been to a Planned Parenthood center for healthcare services, and another 16% say they have a family member or friend who has been to Planned Parenthood. Having a personal connection of this sort to Planned Parenthood is a strong predictor of favorable attitudes. Among voters, both female and male, who either have been to Planned Parenthood personally for healthcare services or have a family member/friend who has done so, fully 70% express either very positive (44%) or somewhat positive (26%) feelings toward Planned Parenthood.
The strength of Planned Parenthood’s positive reputation among women is rooted in three widely held beliefs about the organization.

- First, 61% of women believe Planned Parenthood plays an important role in reducing the number of unintended pregnancies.
- Second, 59% of women believe Planned Parenthood is an important provider of healthcare services to women in America.
- Third, 59% of women believe that for many women, Planned Parenthood is one of the few affordable options for healthcare.

By contrast, only 25% of women believe Planned Parenthood is mainly concerned about making money.

Women indicate a voting preference for a candidate who favors continued funding of Planned Parenthood (64%) over a candidate who wants to defund Planned Parenthood (22%). Independent women split lopsidedly in favor the candidate who favors continued funding, by 61% to 16%.

Fully 69% of women say they disagree with the Republican contention that the CMP videos justify an immediate vote to end all funding of Planned Parenthood, including 55% of all women who strongly disagree. Seventy-nine percent (79%) of independent women voters disagree with the Republicans on this matter (60% strongly disagree), and nearly two in five (38%) Republican women voters are alienated from their own party on this question.