Hello, I am Dr. Rachel Levine and I am serving as the Assistant Secretary for Health within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It is my pleasure to join you today for this webinar on the Title X Notice of Proposed Rulemaking.

Family planning is widely considered one of the most important public health achievements of the 20th Century. As the only Federal program exclusively dedicated to providing STI testing, contraceptive and other family planning services, the Title X program has been a critical element in that success.

On January 28, 2021, President Biden issued a “Memorandum on Protecting Women’s Health at Home and Abroad,” directing HHS to review the 2019 Title X Final Rule and “consider, as soon as practicable, whether to suspend, revise, or rescind, or publish for notice and comment proposed rules suspending, revising, or rescinding, those regulations, consistent with applicable law, including the Administrative Procedure Act.”

HHS conducted an extensive review and consideration of the 2019 Title X Final Rule pursuant to this Presidential memorandum.

The Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, entitled “Ensuring access to equitable, affordable, client-centered, quality family planning services” was opened for public comment on April 15 and comments are due on May 17, 2021.

The proposed revised regulations are substantively similar to those issued in 2000, under which the program operated successfully for years. HHS has proposed several modifications that are needed to
strengthen the program and ensure access to equitable, affordable, client-centered, quality family planning services for all clients, especially for low-income clients.

- Advancing equity for all, including people of color and others who have been historically underserved, marginalized, and adversely affected by persistent poverty and inequality is a priority for the Office of Population Affairs, which administers the Title X program, the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health, and HHS.

- We welcome public comment on this proposed rule.

- Before I conclude, I’d like to acknowledge that this past year has been very difficult and challenging for all of us. COVID-19 has been taxing – physically and mentally – especially for racial and ethnic minority communities and other vulnerable populations.

- Given my professional experience with COVID-19, I’d like to emphasize that all of us, and especially our hardest hit communities, should remain committed to the public health measures for a while longer to stay safe -- wearing a mask, physically distancing that includes avoiding gatherings, and washing our hands frequently. And of course, getting the COVID-19 vaccine as soon as you can.

- Thank you.

- Now I will turn it over to the Office of Population Affairs to walk you through what is in the proposed rule.