

Pam Pearson

Good morning. My name is **Pam Pearson**, and I am the Board Chair of Planned Parenthood South Atlantic. I am so proud to join with our progressive partners for this year's Women United March to further our fight for equity and justice.

Centering the voices of women whose experiences are at the root of the causes we fight for **has never been more important. That's why we are proud to fight alongside with sister movements like #BlackLivesMatter and #Metoo.** We are making progress, but there is still much, much more to do.

We joined forces in that first Women's March because **we knew then** what remains true today: we **ALL** have a stake in protecting and expanding sexual and reproductive rights, LGBTQ rights, racial equality, immigrant rights, disability rights, and more. We know that these are all **HUMAN RIGHTS.**

Marching felt **GREAT**, but wasn't going to build the future we deserve for ourselves and our families and our communities. So, we marched ... and then **WE GOT TO WORK.** We educated, we organized, we ran for office, and we **WON. Because when women win, we all win.**

The 2018-midterm elections saw historic gains in Congressional representation for women, people of color, LGBTQ and younger candidates. Congress now has:

- **43** new women members, including the first Muslim-American women, the first Native-American women, and the youngest woman ever elected to Congress
- **22** people of color
- **5** openly LGBTQ people

And right here in North Carolina, we also made significant gains –

- 34 diverse women will serve in the state house
- 10 more women will serve in the state senate
 - That makes NCGA 26% female!

These historic victories show that what we are doing today is more than just a march - **this is a movement.** It's a symbol of our resistance and the catalyst for more women taking the lead on advocacy than ever before. A moment for women bearing witness to our collective power for change and thinking **"if not us, then who?"**

We've now had almost three months to celebrate our historic wins, but now **we have to get back to work**, thinking about 2020. As we keep our eyes on the United States Supreme Court and the possibility that Roe might be overturned or further restricted, we know who represents us in Raleigh has never been more important, as it will fall to the states to decide what choices a woman can make about if and when she will have children. And it

makes our efforts to elect progressive state legislators who support reproductive rights even more important.

What can you do? Maybe you should ask, what can't you do? Here's a short list:

- In Mecklenburg County, ALL of the state representatives except one support reproductive rights, which is GREAT! Can we sit back and celebrate, NO! We need to ensure that they all get reelected.
- Even more important, if your representative is in a "safe" seat, find a candidate in another district who needs your support.
- In NC District 9, there's going to be another election. I don't know about you, but I can't imagine being represented in Congress by a someone who believes that a woman's role is to be a "servant lover." **Are you with me?** Let's make sure we elect a candidate who supports 21st century rights for women.

Frankly, it is a travesty that in 2019 we are still fighting for access to birth control and safe and legal abortion. **That we are still fighting for women to be able to access affordable, basic health care from a provider that she knows and trusts, and yet the attacks on Planned Parenthood and Medicaid funding continue.**

Let's be clear. **Birth control is basic healthcare for women.** We all know someone who counts on - or has counted on - Planned Parenthood for healthcare. Whether it is birth control, transgender services, life-saving cancer screenings, wellness exams - or the many other critical health services provided by this compassionate and affordable resource.

Those who support reproductive rights stand on the right side of justice. Planned Parenthood is able to be able to provide healthcare to ANYONE regardless of circumstance. To really, and truly, **CARE MORE. And JUDGE LESS.**

As Audre Lorde, the American writer and feminist said, **"I am not free while any woman is unfree, even when her shackles are very different from my own."**

Thank you!