

The Honorable Richard Blumenthal
724 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Judy Chu
1520 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
717 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Marcia Fudge
2344 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Lois Frankel
1037 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

June 23, 2014

Dear Senators Blumenthal and Baldwin and Representatives Chu, Fudge, and Frankel:

We, the undersigned organizations, represent health care and public health professionals who care for women and their families every day. We write in support of the Women's Health Protection Act of 2013 (S. 1696/H.R. 3471). Thank you for your leadership in introducing this critical legislation.

For decades, politicians across the country have passed harmful restrictions on abortion in an attempt to roll back a woman's ability to make health care decisions for herself. In many states, the effect has been catastrophic. Abortion care has become virtually impossible to obtain for far too many women. In fact, six states - Arkansas, Mississippi, Missouri, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming - currently only have one abortion clinic.

Every woman has her own unique circumstances and must be able to make personal medical decisions, including the decision to have an abortion, without political interference. As health care providers and public health professionals, we work every day to make sure women receive the high-quality health care they need in a safe, respectful environment. Political intrusion into the patient-provider relationship is dangerous.

Abortion access has been in peril for several years. In recent years, however, politicians have increasingly sought new ways to interfere with the patient-provider relationship and undermine women's access to abortion care. State legislatures have been more active than ever in passing burdensome requirements that single out abortion providers and services and do nothing to advance women's health or safety. Politicians are not medical experts and yet politicians have written these laws with the end goal of having safe, legal abortion difficult or even impossible to access.

For example, states have approved:

- Requirements that health care providers perform tests and procedures even if they are not medically necessary;

- Measures that force health care providers to follow outdated medical guidelines rather than follow the current standard of care;
- Prohibitions on using telemedicine advancements for abortion;
- Regulations for women's health centers that are burdensome and medically unnecessary and serve only to make it harder for clinics to stay open;
- Requirements that physicians providing abortion maintain admitting privileges at local hospitals, despite the safety of abortion and the fact that admitting privileges are not necessary in the event of a complication;
- Measures that require a woman who has decided to have an abortion to make multiple unnecessary trips to the abortion provider; and
- Legislation forcing a woman to visit an anti-abortion “crisis pregnancy center.”

These restrictions target abortion providers and women seeking abortion care with regulations and requirements that are not imposed on any other health care providers. Moreover, these laws and policies have been passed under the guise of protecting women, and in fact fail to improve women’s health or safety because they are not based on medical and scientific evidence. These requirements greatly impede women’s access to safe and legal abortion.

As groups representing health care professionals, we understand that abortion access is fundamental to women's health. Abortion is a safe medical procedure and complications are rare. These restrictions prevent health care providers from offering abortion care, limiting women’s access to safe and comprehensive reproductive health care.

It is time to put a stop to laws that are unrelated to scientific evidence and are counter to the health care needs of patients. We need a federal law that will protect all women's access to abortion so that health care providers can deliver the best possible care. A woman's ability to obtain a safe and legal abortion should not depend on her zip code. We need the Women’s Health Protection Act. We commend you for your leadership in bringing forth this critical legislation and pledge our support in working toward its passage.

Sincerely,

American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

American Medical Student Association

American Medical Women’s Association

American Nurses Association

American Public Health Association

Association of Reproductive Health Professionals

Medical Students for Choice

National Abortion Federation

National Family Planning & Reproductive Health Association
National Physicians Alliance
Physicians for Reproductive Health
Planned Parenthood Federation of America

cc: U.S. Senate
U.S. House of Representatives