

Resolution on Reproductive Rights

Preamble

The Washington State Public Health Association (WSPHA) is committed to a quality healthcare system that meets the needs and health of all. Accessibility and affordability to all reproductive healthcare, including abortion care, is an essential component of this system. WSPHA is dismayed and saddened by the ruling of the Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) overturning nearly fifty years of settled case law, that a person's right to an abortion is constitutionally protected. This is an example where a fundamental healthcare right has been taken away from persons living in this country. This decision will adversely affect the health and well-being of millions of individuals.

Resolution

WHEREAS, public health has a fundamental duty to prevent illness, injury, and premature death; and

WHEREAS, the people of the state of Washington adopted Initiative 120 in 1991, which recognized and reaffirmed that the government or its agents may not interfere with or deny a pregnant individual's fundamental right of privacy in making reproductive decisions, such as whether to obtain an abortion; and

WHEREAS, the people of the state of Washington have rejected attempts (I-471 in 1984 and I-694 in 1998) to restrict or limit the rights declared and affirmed by popular vote to ensure that a pregnant individual's choice and bodily autonomy in their health care decisions, including their reproductive health care decisions; and

WHEREAS, the Washington Constitution provides individuals a right of personal bodily autonomy that goes beyond those rights secured by statute, initiative, and referendum; and

WHEREAS, abortion is an essential component of healthcare because it provides all birthing people the ability to plan and space their pregnancies which clearly improves their physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, and economic wellbeing; and

WHEREAS, a clinician's first and primary duty is to the patient. Their professional role is to make recommendations on the basis of the best available medical evidence and to pursue options that comport with the patient's unique health needs, values, and preferences. Restrictive laws may further reduce access to other healthcare needs as there could be fewer clinicians (OB-GYN and primary care) in states that have restricted access to abortion; and

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WHEREAS, the practice of abortion care, like all healthcare, should be driven by evidence-based standards developed and supported by medical professionals; and

WHEREAS, criminalizing reproductive healthcare including abortion can have unintentional consequences on the healthcare system and health and well-being of all persons in the United States; and

WHEREAS, patients and clinicians are required to overcome numerous barriers erected by abortion opponents. These barriers—waiting periods, so-called “counseling” requirements, bans on insurance coverage, limits on who can perform abortions, and TRAP laws—are not intended to protect people who can get pregnant safely, they are designed to coerce people into giving birth to unwanted children. Lack of access to reproductive health care, including abortion, can lead to other worsening of the social determinants of health – such as employment, employability, likelihood of being in poverty, housing certainty, challenges in educational attainment among others. People of color, those who live in rural areas, and those with lower socioeconomic status will be more adversely affected than wealthier white individuals; and

WHEREAS, as the laws that criminalize abortion perpetuate structural racism and will lead to more black, indigenous, and people of color becoming incarcerated for providing or receiving an abortion, or by just having a miscarriage; and

WHEREAS, the SCOTUS ruling will likely have a disproportionate effect for transgender, nonbinary, and gender non-conforming people who already face challenges, such as discrimination and treatment refusal, and accessing healthcare; and

WHEREAS, health misinformation is rampant and could be a barrier to individuals searching for safe, legal, and quality reproductive care and WSPHA will be emphatic about what is false or misinformation about abortion or reproductive rights, including in WSPHA communications and education; and

WHEREAS, there are numerous historical and contemporary examples of mistreatment of persons and medical providers have taken a Hippocratic oath to protect patients; and

WHEREAS, abortion has become less accessible, nearly prohibited, or criminalized in many states, including neighboring states such as Idaho and puts an additional strain on healthcare access and resources in Washington State.

Therefore, be it **RESOLVED** on October 13, 2022 the Washington State Public Health Association is committed to ensuring that:

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- Reproductive healthcare including abortion are recognized as an essential component of healthcare; and
- People are to be trusted with making their own decisions regarding their own health, wellbeing, and style of birth and that these decisions will remain private and confidential between that patient and their clinician; and
- Reproductive healthcare including abortion care shall always be safe, affordable, and accessible throughout Washington State and integrated into the healthcare safety net; and
- Both public and private health insurance shall cover all reproductive healthcare including abortion care; and
- Facilities or healthcare professionals providing reproductive healthcare, including abortion care, shall not be subjected to regulations more burdensome than those imposed on facilities or healthcare professionals that provide medically comparable procedures; and
- Healthcare professionals providing reproductive health care including abortion care shall follow best medical practices developed and supported by scientific evidence; and
- Washington State will continue to have full access to reproductive health care including abortion to all persons; and
- Access to healthcare is a key tenet of public health, and abortion is healthcare. We are committed, with our partners, to protect access in Washington State and to advocate for federal legislation that provides access and sustains reproductive health services; and
- That Washington State be a sanctuary to all seeking healthcare services. Be it further resolved that WSPHA supports protection of individuals, healthcare professionals, and facilities that provide reproductive healthcare including abortion. This includes law enforcement agencies NOT cooperating with any out-of-state investigation, prosecution, or other legal action based on another state's statute as it relates to abortion and reproductive healthcare; and
- That racism is a public health crisis and WSPHA remains committed to removing racism from healthcare and reproductive health services including abortion; and
- That WSPHA will provide education on impacts that racism and misinformation have on reproductive healthcare access; and
- Reproductive healthcare shall be available and equitably accessible to transgender, nonbinary, and gender non-conforming persons; and
- WSPHA is opposed to criminalizing reproductive healthcare; and
- WSPHA does not support laws that put providers in direct opposition to the oath they have taken; and
- That WSPHA will support legislation and policies that align with this resolution.