

March 23, 2023

Dear Representative,

We, the undersigned 28 organizations dedicated to economic justice and women's economic well-being, urge you to cosponsor the Women's Health Protection Act, to be reintroduced next week, and push for its swift passage. The Women's Health Protection Act (WHPA) would create a statutory right for health care providers to provide abortion care and a right for their patients to receive that care, free from medically unnecessary restrictions that single out abortion and impede access.

Since *Roe v. Wade* was overturned last June, nearly 20 states have enacted extreme abortion bans or restrictions, rendering care unavailable for millions. Due to systemic racism and a long history of unequal access to health care in our country, the harms of these restrictions have fallen hardest on people working to make ends meet, who are more likely to be people of color, immigrants, young people, people with disabilities, the LGBTQI+ community, and those living in rural and other medically underserved areas. Each person, regardless of their zip code or income, should have the freedom to live, work, and make decisions about their health and their future with dignity and respect.

The right to abortion is not just the right to decide if and when to have a child—it is also the right to bodily autonomy, to determine one's own life and thrive, and it is vital to social and economic equality. We write in support of the Women's Health Protection Act and abortion access because economic justice and reproductive freedom are inextricably linked: research demonstrates that the freedom to make decisions about our own reproductive health care is fundamental to our economic security throughout our lives.

The evidence that abortion access affects women's economic well-being is crystal clear: research has found that people who are denied an abortion are significantly more likely to fall into poverty, increase their amount of debt and generally have worse financial security for years.¹ Furthermore, lack of abortion access limits women's education attainment, labor force participation, and the ability to access higher paying jobs, ultimately causing severe consequences for a person's career trajectory, particularly for Black women.² On the other hand,

¹ Miller, S., Wherry, L., & Foster, D.G. (2022, January). *The Economic Consequences of Being Denied an Abortion*. Retrieved 26 September 2022 from the National Bureau of Economic Research website:

https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w26662/w26662.pdf; Foster, D.G., Ralph, L.J., Biggs, M.A., Gerdtz, C., Roberts, S.C.M., & Glymour, M.A. (2018, February) Socioeconomic outcomes of women who receive and women who are denied wanted abortions. *American Journal of Public Health, 108*(3), 407-413; Miller, S., Wherry, L.R., & Foster, D.G. (2020, January). What happens after an abortion denial?

² Among young Black women, access to abortion increases college entrance by 100 percent and employment status by 44 percent. Jones, K. (2021, August). At a Crossroads: The impact of abortion access on future economic outcomes. Retrieved 5 September 2022 from the American University website:

<https://dra.american.edu/islandora/object/auislandora%3A95123/datastream/PDF/view>.

research has shown that abortion access has increased educational attainment for Black women, increased women's participation in the workforce, and led to improved educational and economic outcomes for children.³

A recent study found that the average cost of childbirth in the U.S. for people with private, employer-sponsored insurance in 2020 was \$13,393, which accounts for nearly one-quarter (22%) of annual per capita income.⁴ But the costs of forced pregnancy do not end with the health care bills during pregnancy, childbirth admission, and postpartum care: the lack of vital work supports and protections for women in the US, such as paid leave, paid sick days, and reasonable accommodations for pregnancy mean that many are forced to choose between paying their bills and caring for their own health and the health of their loved ones. It means that they may be required to return to work immediately after giving birth, juggling parenting responsibilities and grappling with the skyrocketing costs of childcare. As it stands, three out of four workers do not have paid family leave, and one in four do not have a single paid sick day.⁵ Of these people, Black, Latinx, and Native workers are the least likely to have access to paid leave or the economic resources to take unpaid leave following childbirth.⁶ Furthermore, mothers, despite increasingly being the breadwinners in their families, often face a “motherhood wage penalty” due in part to caregiving responsibilities:⁷ mothers working full time, year round are paid just 74 cents for every dollar paid to fathers.⁸ Disaggregated data reveals even starker pay gaps for mothers of color: for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic fathers, Black mothers are paid just 52 cents, Latina mothers just 47 cents, and Native American mothers 49 cents.⁹ These wage

³ Bernstein, A. & Jones, K.M. (2019). *The Economic Effects of Abortion Access: A Review of the Evidence*. Retrieved 11 October 2022 from Institute for Women's Policy Research website: https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/B379_Abortion-Access_rfinal.pdf.

⁴ Tripoli, S. & Axler, A. (2023). What It Costs to Have a Baby in America: A State-by-State Analysis. Retrieved 10 February 2023 from Families USA website: https://familiesusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/People-First-Care_Labor-and-Delivery.pdf.

⁵ National Partnership analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2022). *Employee Benefits in the United States Summary* [Press Release]. Retrieved 26 September 2022, from https://www.bls.gov/news.release/ebs2_nr0.htm.

⁶ Mason, J., & Molina Acosta, P. (2021, March). *Called to Care: A Racially Just Recovery Demands Paid Family and Medical Leave*. Retrieved 26 September 2022 from National Partnership for Women & Families website: <https://www.nationalpartnership.org/our-work/economic-justice/reports/called-to-care-a-racially-just-demands-paid-family-and-medical-leave.html>; Gupta, P., Goldman, T., Hernandez, E. & Rose, M. (2018, December). *Paid Family and Medical Leave is Critical for Low-Wage Workers and Their Families*. Retrieved 26 September 2022 from the Center for Law and Social Policy website: <https://www.clasp.org/publications/fact-sheet/paid-family-and-medical-leave-critical-low-wage-workers-and-their-families/>.

⁷ Boesh, D., & Hamm, K. (2020, June). *Valuing Women's Caregiving During and After the Coronavirus Crisis*. Retrieved 26 September 2022 from The Center for American Progress website: <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/valuing-womens-caregiving-coronavirus-crisis/>.

⁸ National Women's Law Center. (2022, August 31). *The Wage Gap Shortchanges Mothers*. Retrieved 26 September 2022, from <https://nwlc.org/resource/mothers-equal-pay-day/>.

⁹ National Women's Law Center. (2022, August 31). *The Wage Gap Shortchanges Mothers*. Retrieved 26 September 2022, from <https://nwlc.org/resource/mothers-equal-pay-day/>.

gaps cause ripple effects on people's entire economic lives, affecting their ability to afford health and child care costs, save up for retirement, pay their mortgage, or stay away from debt.

Unfortunately and uncoincidentally, states that have enacted the most abortion restrictions are also the states that fail to implement policies such as raising the minimum wage, ensuring access to paid leave and paid sick days, and closing the gender wage gap. This places pregnant people in an impossible situation that threatens their economic well-being and deprives them of autonomy not just over their bodies but the trajectory of their lives. Government interference on reproductive freedom is draconian enough, but to deny these common sense benefits for those facing forced pregnancy is especially egregious.

Abortion access is an economic justice issue. It enables women and people who can get pregnant to thrive, control their own life paths, and to live with dignity. The decision to parent is one of the biggest and most important life decisions a person can make, and it has the ability to drastically change the economic well-being of a person's life. In the wake of the *Dobbs* decision, Congress must respond with the recognition that abortion access cannot be separated from economic justice: we urge you to cosponsor the Women's Health Protection Act and advocate with us for its passage.

Sincerely,

9to5

A Better Balance

All-Options

American Association of University Women

American Federation of Teachers

Caring Across Generations

Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)

Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF)

Family Values @ Work

Family Values @ Work Action

Healthy Nourishments, LLC

Institute for Women's Policy Research

Jewish Women International

Justice for Migrant Women

March for Moms

MomsRising

National Council of Jewish Women

National Employment Law Project

National Network to End Domestic Violence

National Organization for Women

National Partnership for Women & Families

North Carolina Justice Center

Oxfam America

Rhia Ventures

The National Domestic Violence Hotline

Union for Reform Judaism

USOW

Women of Reform Judaism

Women's Law Project