

United States Senate
Washington, DC

Re: *Senate Budget Committee Hearing: No Rights to Speak of: The Economic Harms of Restricting Reproductive Freedom*

February 28, 2024

Dear Senator,

We, the undersigned 61 organizations dedicated to economic justice and gender justice write in support of access to abortion and recognize that the freedom to control our reproductive lives is fundamental to our economic security, well-being, and equality. We encourage you to name publicly that abortion access is essential to economic justice and to support policies that advance sexual and reproductive health and rights for all.

Since the Supreme Court erroneously overturned the constitutional right to abortion in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, 14 states are currently enforcing total bans on abortion and 7 additional states restrict access under limits that would have been blatantly unconstitutional under *Roe*. One in three women of reproductive age — in addition to affected transgender and nonbinary people — are blocked from accessing abortion in their home state. Due to systemic racism and a long history of unequal access to health care in our country, the harms of these restrictive policies have fallen hardest on those who are more likely to be people of color, people who are immigrants, young people, people with disabilities, the LGBTQI+ community, people with low to no income, and those living in rural and/or medically underserved areas. Each person, no matter their zip code, income, or ability to travel should have the freedom to live, work, and make decisions about their health and their future with dignity and respect.

Economic security is necessary for all people to participate fully in society, and it is particularly vital for those who have been historically denied economic freedom, including women and other individuals who can become pregnant. Economic security both allows individuals the opportunity to access the full spectrum of reproductive health care and is also the result of having that access, and it makes it more likely that those who choose to parent are able to do so safely. Decisions about reproductive health care and economic wellbeing are intertwined for many abortion seekers, too, with 40 percent of abortion patients citing financial reasons in their decision to seek abortion care.¹ Furthermore, over half of abortion patients are already parents. These financial barriers are compounded by the harms of the Hyde Amendment, which denies

¹ Biggs MA, Gould H, Foster DG. Understanding why women seek abortions in the US. BMC Womens Health. 2013 Jul 5;13:29. doi: 10.1186/1472-6874-13-29. PMID: 23829590; PMCID: PMC3729671.

abortion coverage to individuals enrolled in the Medicaid program, putting abortion care even further out of reach for those struggling to make ends meet. While 17 states use their own funds to cover abortions for Medicaid beneficiaries, 32 states and DC only cover abortions under the extreme limited circumstances set forth by the Hyde Amendment (or even less).² Research clearly demonstrates that having the freedom to manage one's reproductive and sexual health and the ability to access that care is directly linked to their immediate and future economic security.

The right to abortion is not just the right to decide if, when, and how to have a child—but also includes the right to bodily autonomy and the right to determine one's own life and thrive. For women in particular, the evidence that abortion access affects their economic well-being is clear: women who are denied an abortion are significantly more likely to fall into poverty, increase their amount of debt, and generally have worse financial security in the years following the denied abortion, as compared to individuals who received abortion care.³ Furthermore, lack of abortion access limits women's education attainment, labor force participation, and the ability to access higher paying jobs, ultimately harming a person's economic security, particularly for Black women.⁴ On the other hand, research shows that for those who had pregnancies before the age of 24, having abortion access increased their probability of completing college by 72 percent.⁵ Studies have found 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.⁶ In fact, for Black women who had pregnancies before the age of 24, access to abortion increased individual earnings by 75-100 percent per year and family income by more than 100 percent per year.⁷

For individuals who are forced to give birth, the economic consequences are worsened by inequitable health coverage, high costs of pregnancy-related care, and inadequate infrastructure

² South Dakota, in violation of the Hyde Amendment, only covers cases of life endangerment, despite federal requirements to cover abortion in cases of rape and incest as well.

³ 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?

⁴ 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/auslandora%3A95123/datastream/PDF/view>.

⁵ Research Brief: The Causal Relationship Between Contraception, Abortion, And Economic Well-Being, Institute for Women's Policy Research, Retrieved 8 February 2024, <https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/IWPR-Abortion-Landscape-Brief-2023.pdf>.

⁶ 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.

⁷ Research Brief: The Causal Relationship Between Contraception, Abortion, And Economic Well-Being, *Institute for Women's Policy Research*, Retrieved 8 February 2024,

<https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/IWPR-Abortion-Landscape-Brief-2023.pdf>.

to support parents. 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 average personal income.⁸ The lack of vital work supports and protections for people in the U.S., such as paid family and medical leave and paid sick days, 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, nearly three out of four workers do not have paid family leave, and almost one in four in the private sector do not have a single paid sick day.⁹ 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.¹⁰ Furthermore, mothers, despite increasingly being the breadwinners in their families, often face a “motherhood wage penalty” due in part to caregiving responsibilities:¹¹ mothers working full time, year round are paid just 74 cents for every dollar paid to fathers.¹² 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.¹³ These wage 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 out of debt.

States that have enacted the most extreme abortion restrictions are also the states that have failed to implement policies that promote economic security such as raising the minimum wage, ensuring access to paid leave and paid sick days, expanding Medicaid, extending Medicaid postpartum coverage, and implementing fair scheduling laws to cut down on unstable and unpredictable work schedules. These policy failures can threaten people’s economic well-being

⁸ 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

⁹ Mason, J. (2023, September 21). *When We Fight, We Win - Paid Sick Days and Paid Family Leave*. Retrieved 21 February 2024, from <https://nationalpartnership.org/when-we-fight-we-win-paid-sick-days-and-paid-family-leave/>.

¹⁰ 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/>.

¹¹ 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/>.

¹² 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/>.

¹³ 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/>.

and deprive them of autonomy, not just over their bodies and pregnancies, but the trajectory of their entire lives.

Access to abortion enables individuals to thrive, determine their future, and live with dignity. The decision to parent is one of the most important life decisions a person can make, and specifically, has the ability to drastically change the economic well-being of a person's life. Congress must recognize that abortion access cannot be separated from economic justice. We urge you to speak out against attacks on sexual and reproductive health care, including abortion, in service of economic justice for all.

Sincerely,

9to5

A Better Balance

Advocates for Youth

All-Options

American Association of University Women

American College of Nurse-Midwives

American Humanist Association

American Society for Reproductive Medicine

Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs

Campaign for a Family Friendly Economy

Center for American Progress

Center for Biological Diversity

Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)

Center for Reproductive Rights

Center for WorkLife Law

Equal Rights Advocates

Family Equality

Family Values @ Work

Guttmacher Institute

Health Care for America Now (HCAN)

Ibis Reproductive Health

In Our Own Voice: National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda

Indivisible

Institute for Women's Policy Research

Ipas

Jacobs Institute of Women's Health

Legal Momentum, The Women's Legal Defense and Education Fund

NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.

National Abortion Federation
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum
National Center for Lesbian Rights
National Council of Jewish Women
National Family Planning & Reproductive Health Association
National Health Law Program
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Justice
National Network to End Domestic Violence
National Organization for Women Foundation
National Women's Health Network
National Women's Law Center
North Carolina Justice Center
Oxfam America
PFLAG National
Physicians for Reproductive Health
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
Poder Latinx
Positive Women's Network-USA
Power to Decide
Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice
Reproductive Freedom for All (formerly NARAL Pro-Choice America)
Reproductive Justice Maryland
SIECUS: Sex Ed for Social Change
The Century Foundation's Health Equity and Reform team
The National Domestic Violence Hotline
The University of Baltimore School of Law Center on Applied Feminism
UCSF Bixby Center for Global Reproductive Health
Union for Reform Judaism
URGE: Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equity
Washington State Women's Commission
Women of Reform Judaism
Women's Law Center of Maryland
Women's Law Project