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## Answer the Call to “Codify Roe”

WHPA Messaging, August 2020

*The Women’s Health Protection Act (WHPA) is federal legislation that answers recent calls to “codify Roe” by assuring that the right to abortion first recognized in Roe v. Wade is a reality for people everywhere.*

### Top Messages

- *Roe v. Wade*—the landmark 1973 Supreme Court ruling affirming the constitutional right to abortion—is the law of the land. But, for many people in the United States, accessing abortion care has become difficult, and in some cases, is nearly impossible due to state-level laws, restrictions, and bans on abortion.
- These restrictions obstruct and delay abortion access, decrease quality of care, and prevent people from making personal decisions about their health, their lives, and their futures.
- The harms these barriers create are deeply unequal, falling most heavily on underserved people and communities, including people of color, young people, those with low incomes, LGBTQ people, and people living in rural or medically underserved areas.
- Anti-abortion politicians are escalating their attacks with hundreds of deceptive laws that continue to impede access to abortion care. It’s time for Congress to safeguard access to abortion care across the United States.
- **That’s why we need the Women’s Health Protection Act (WHPA): federal legislation that answers recent calls to “codify Roe” by assuring that the right to abortion first recognized in *Roe v. Wade* is a reality for people everywhere.** WHPA establishes a statutory right for health care providers to provide abortion care, and a corresponding right for their patients to receive care, free from medically unnecessary limitations and bans that single out abortion and impede access to care.

### Reproductive Rights are Under Attack

There is a nationwide effort to eliminate abortion access through burdensome and unnecessary state-level bans and restrictions. Even during the COVID-19 pandemic, anti-abortion legislators have exploited the public health crisis to try to ban abortion care, state by state, law by law.

- Since 2011, anti-abortion lawmakers have pushed over 450 restrictive laws through state legislatures severely limiting people’s access to abortion care.
- Today, nearly 90 percent of American counties are without a single abortion provider, and twenty-seven cities are “abortion deserts,” where patients must travel 100 miles or more to reach an abortion provider.

These harmful restrictions exacerbate health disparities and disproportionately impact people who already face barriers to accessing quality health care, including people of color, young people, those with low incomes, LGBTQ people, and people living in rural or medically underserved areas.

- People face significant life challenges in arranging the necessary travel, time off from work, and childcare that accessing abortion care now requires due to waiting periods, multiple visits being required, and distance from providers.
- A 2018 National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine (NASEM) report found that “abortion care is safe and effective, but its level of quality is negatively impacted due to medically unnecessary abortion regulations.”
- Being denied an abortion has serious consequences on a woman’s health and well-being, according to a longitudinal study. Women denied abortion care are at increased risk of experiencing poverty, physical health impairments, and intimate partner violence.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, medically unnecessary requirements—including multiple clinic visits and prohibitions on telemedicine—endanger the health and well-being of pregnant people and undermine public health efforts.

Abortion is health care that one in four women in the United States will make the decision to access in her lifetime. But today, the ability to access abortion care depends on where you happen to live.

**It's time for Congress to protect abortion rights and access nationwide.**

- Abortion is a constitutional right. By taking urgent action on WHPA, Congress can assure that this right is a reality for all people, no matter where they live.
- WHPA is the targeted solution to the current patchwork of abortion access wrought by an avalanche of state-level laws restricting abortion in vast swaths of our country.
- WHPA would protect against unnecessary burdens and bans on reproductive health care, and allow us all to make vital decisions about our own health, lives, and futures, no matter our zip code.

*Everyone deserves equal access to comprehensive reproductive health care, no matter where they live, and to be able to make personal decisions and seek abortion care free from political interference. This is what the Women’s Health Protection Act stands for.*