



cobalt

Advancing Abortion Access
and Reproductive Rights

June 16, 2021

The Honorable Richard Blumenthal
706 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ted Cruz
127A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Blumenthal and Ranking Member Cruz:

My name is Karen Middleton. I am submitting my testimony in strong support of the Women's Health Protection Act as President of Cobalt and on behalf of our 75,000 members and supporters in Colorado.

Cobalt is a grassroots, statewide Colorado organization that advances abortion access and reproductive rights. Our organization began in 1967 when Colorado became the first state to allow safe, legal abortion. Cobalt believes nothing should stand between you and your health decisions, which is why we are dedicated to fighting for systems, structures and policies that protect reproductive rights and guarantee comprehensive, universal access to reproductive healthcare, including abortion.

Colorado state law is neutral on abortion - while we have successfully defeated bad and even unconstitutional bills and ballot measures, we don't have anything protective of abortion access in state law. This is why we need the Women's Health Protection Act.

I want to thank our Colorado US Representatives DeGette, Perlmutter, Neguse, and Crow for co-sponsoring this bill. And we very much appreciate our US Senators Bennet and Hickenlooper, who have been longstanding supporters of abortion rights, for co-sponsoring WHPA in the Senate.

I started at Cobalt in 2013. Since then, Colorado has seen a constant deluge of attempts to restrict abortion access with bills at the General Assembly and FOUR attempts to ban

abortion on the ballot since 2008. These attempts have escalated in recent years as abortion opponents have seen the Supreme Court grow more and more hostile to the Constitutional right to abortion established in *Roe*.

Since 2013, there have been more than thirty bills attempting to ban or restrict abortion at the Colorado General Assembly. They include everything from ‘personhood bills’ making a fertilized egg a person under Colorado law to TRAP laws modeled on the Texas restrictions found unconstitutional in *Whole Women’s Health v. Hellerstedt*. Recent attempts have included the junk science notion of ‘abortion reversal’, which is so dangerous the one valid medical study on it had to be halted after three women went to the hospital with severe bleeding.

We have defeated these bills and ballot measures in Colorado by landslide margins. But as states around us have enacted bans and restrictions, the pressure on Colorado as a haven state for abortion care has increased. Our Cobalt abortion fund has seen patients needing help from all over the country, including as far away as Ohio, Texas, and Florida. And COVID 19 was a glimpse of what it will be like if states are allowed to restrict abortion care using any and all excuses.

Abortion is a right, protected by the U.S. Constitution and recognized in international human rights law. The U.S. Supreme Court has repeatedly affirmed—most recently in 2020—that the Constitution’s guarantees of personal privacy and liberty protect a person’s right to end a pregnancy. And international human rights law recognizes and protects access to abortion as central to health, equality, and non-discrimination.

Coloradans clearly agree. It is a fundamental part of our Colorado values - reinforced over and over by voters - that the right to access abortion should remain between patients and providers, not with politicians. The rights established in *Roe* should not be undermined by politics.

We need the Women’s Health Protection Act to ensure that doesn’t happen.

Thank you.

Karen Middleton, President, Cobalt
Testimony in Support of the Women’s Health Protection Act
United States Senate Judiciary Committee
Subcommittee on the Constitution