



new hampshire

WOMEN'S FOUNDATION

To: Chair Carson and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee

Re: CACR 24, relating to reproductive freedom. Providing that all persons have the right to make their own reproductive decisions.

Date: January 4, 2024

Position: Ought to Pass

The New Hampshire Women's Foundation invests in equality and opportunity for New Hampshire women and girls through research, education, advocacy, and grantmaking.

We respectfully encourage the Committee to recommend CACR 24 Ought to Pass because access to the full range of reproductive health care, including abortion, is crucial to women's health and economic security and has long-term impacts on women and their families. **New Hampshire is the only state in New England that has not protected the right to abortion in state law.** New Hampshire women, from across the political spectrum, have fought for decades for their right to reproductive freedom. **It is time to allow New Hampshire voters to decide if there should be a clear and affirming right to bodily autonomy in the state's constitution.**

New Hampshire Context in the Region and Country

The "Live Free or Die" state has had a long, bipartisan history of supporting abortion access, however, since the June 2022 Supreme Court decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women Health Organization* eliminated the federal right to abortion and left access up to the states, New Hampshire is the only state in New England that has not protected the right to abortion in state law.

Reproductive Health Care is Crucial to Women's Health

We believe women and people who can become pregnant have the right to make decisions about their bodies, their families and their lives. Not only is the choice to end a pregnancy a right, but it is, for some, a means to economic prosperity, safety and the ability to flee violence, and the opportunity to pursue dreams and develop thriving communities. In New Hampshire, women are more likely than men to live in poverty, with a gender wage gap that increases by race, ethnicity, and county, and are more likely to have been impacted by interpersonal and/or sexual violence. These indicators of well-being are significantly impacted by the ability to make reproductive decisions, including abortion, for oneself. We must protect the right to abortion to continue to support women's autonomy, health, wellness, economic security and ability to support thriving families and communities in New Hampshire.

Economic Impacts of Limiting Access

Deciding whether and when to have a child is the most consequential decision relative to a woman's lifetime economic well-being. Whether a woman is pregnant for the first time or has children already; whether she never intended to become pregnant or circumstances have changed; she deserves to have all options available to her to make the best decision for herself. Women who seek but are denied an abortion go on to experience economic hardship and economic insecurity, lasting for years and impacting the next generation. An affirmative right to all reproductive health care including abortion will promote greater economic security for New Hampshire women and families in three keys areas:

- 1) **Long-Term Economic Security** – Control over reproductive health allows women to invest more heavily in their potential, including increased schooling and job training, which contribute to greater long-term economic security. Women who have access to abortion have higher rates of high school and college graduation.¹
- 2) **Labor Force Participation** – It takes four years on average for a woman to return full time to the workforce after childbirth following abortion denial.²
- 3) **Multi-Generational Impact** – Abortion access not only has economic benefits for the pregnant person, but also benefits other children (born previous or subsequent) in her household: lower rates of poverty and higher rates of high school graduation and college attendance.³ Access to abortion contributes to the economic mobility of women and is critical to disrupt the cycle of poverty between generations. When women are healthy and prosperous, their families succeed and our communities grow stronger.

Conclusion

New Hampshire women have fought for decades for their right to reproductive freedom; **it is time to allow New Hampshire voters to decide if there should be a clear and affirming right to bodily autonomy in the state's constitution.**

Respectfully submitted,

Devan Quinn
Director of Policy
New Hampshire Women's Foundation

¹ Angrist and Evans, "Schooling and Labor Market Consequences of the post-1970's State Abortion Reforms", In Research in Labor Economics, 2000, pp75-113

² Bernstein, Anna and Jones, Kelly, "The Economic Effects of Abortion Access: A Review of the Evidence", Institute for Women's Policy Research, 2019

³ ANSIRH, 2019 Introduction to the Turnaway Study. UCSF www.anshirh.org