

February 10, 2020

Dear Chairman Pallone, Chairwoman Eshoo, Ranking Member Burgess, and Members of the Subcommittee:

I am writing to express the National Family Planning & Reproductive Health Association's (NFPRHA) support for H.R. 2975, the Women's Health Protection Act (WHPA). This federal legislation would protect access to abortion care from state-level bans and medically unnecessary restrictions that are currently reducing or eliminating access to care across the country.

NFPRHA is a non-partisan 501(c)3 membership association that advances and elevates the importance of family planning in the nation's health care system and promotes and supports the work of family planning providers and administrators, especially in the safety net. Representing close to 1,000 members that operate or fund more than 3,500 health centers in the United States, NFPRHA conducts and participates in research; provides educational subject matter expertise to policymakers, health care providers, and the public; and offers its members capacity-building support aimed at maximizing their effectiveness and financial sustainability as providers of essential health care.

NFPRHA believes that abortion is a medical service that must be legal, safe and accessible to all women who seek it. NFPRHA opposes all ideologically-driven attempts to restrict access to abortion care, including but not limited to the Hyde amendment, religious restrictions, provider refusal clauses, insurance coverage bans, public funding bans, burdensome and unnecessary requirements on facilities that offer abortion services or clinicians who perform abortions (collectively known as targeted regulation of abortion providers or TRAP provisions), mandatory waiting periods, parental notification and consent laws for adolescents, and mandatory biased counseling, information, or procedures. Many of these barriers are the very restrictions that WHPA would address.

NFPRHA is alarmed that anti-abortion lawmakers continue to push increasingly extreme and harmful laws that single out abortion care for restrictions that do not apply to similar health care, with nearly 450 restrictive laws coming into effect since 2011. These laws are designed to block access to abortion care, or at least delay access and shame people seeking abortion services. They often lead to patients being unable to access the abortion they seek, which can have serious long-lasting consequences on a person's health and well-being including increasing the risk of experiencing poverty, physical health impairments, and intimate partner violence.¹

¹ Foster DG, et al, "Socioeconomic outcomes of women who receive and women who are denied wanted abortions," *American Journal Of Public Health* (2018) Mar; 108(3):407-413; Advancing New Standards in Reproductive Health, "Turnaway Study: Long-term study shows that restricting abortion harms women," Bixby Center For Global Reproductive Health (retrieved from https://www.ansirh.org/sites/default/files/publications/files/turnaway_study_brief_web.pdf).

This coordinated, nationwide strategy to eliminate abortion access has made the constitutional right to access abortion dependent on where a person happens to live. Today, nearly 90 percent of American counties are without a single abortion provider, leaving millions of women to travel long distance and incur sometimes insurmountable costs when seeking care. As the membership association for publicly funded family planning, NFPRHA understands how important it is that patients can access these sensitive health services easily and safely and that providers can offer these services based on their best medical judgment, not the opinions of ideologically motivated lawmakers.

The Women's Health Protection Act would put a stop to these harmful restrictions and bans, and protect access to abortion care for all, no matter where a person happens to live. The bill would establish a statutory right for health care providers to provide, and their patients to receive, abortion care free from medically unnecessary restrictions, limitations, and bans that single out abortion and impede access to care. Now is the time for Congress to pass the Women's Health Protection Act.

We commend this committee for holding a hearing on this critical legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Clare M. Coleman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Clare Coleman
President & CEO
National Family Planning & Reproductive Health Association