

# AN OPEN LETTER TO GOVERNOR HOCHUL ON PROTECTING ABORTION ACCESS IN NEW YORK

## WE, THE UNDERSIGNED, URGE YOU TO INCLUDE THE REPRODUCTIVE FREEDOM AND EQUITY FUNDING PROGRAM IN YOUR STATE OF STATE ADDRESS AND EXECUTIVE BUDGET.

Dear Governor Hochul,

In June 2022, the Supreme Court ended the federal constitutional right to abortion, stripping millions of people of their reproductive freedom and handing the power to determine whether abortion is legal to the states. In the wake of that decision, newly enacted laws across the country have left one third of people with the capacity for pregnancy living in states where abortion has been banned or severely restricted.<sup>1</sup> **While the Reproductive Health Act of 2019 preserves the legality of abortion in New York, that right is meaningless without access. We, the undersigned, therefore urge you to include the Reproductive Freedom and Equity Funding Program (A.361-B/S.348-B) in your State of the State Address and Executive Budget.**

Even before *Roe* was overturned, gaps in abortion accessibility have existed in our state and across the country. In 2020, 352,000 women of reproductive age in New York lived in a county without an abortion provider.<sup>2</sup> Twenty-five out of 62 counties in New York State do not have even one abortion provider. It is estimated that the average travel time for patients seeking an abortion in the United States has tripled since the *Dobbs* decision.<sup>3</sup> The monthly number of abortions in New York State is also up 2% to 9,198. The New York Abortion Access Fund reported that in 2023, 66% of callers seeking assistance were resident New Yorkers and 96% of callers—regardless of where they hailed from—received care in New York. The burden of increased travel to access care inherently creates unnecessary obstacles that will make it increasingly challenging, if not impossible, for many to access abortion while providers are struggling to accommodate the current needs of patients in search of care. Existing abortion funds have successfully relied on individual donations and volunteer staff to assist individuals who need funding, but they too are already overwhelmed by requests for support<sup>4</sup> and funds are running out.

For New York to truly be a beacon of abortion access, we must invest in that access. Passing the Reproductive Freedom and Equity Funding Program and funding it through the state budget will **provide much-needed grants to abortion providers and practical support funds**, the organizations that make the right to care a reality.

**New York's abortion providers are already struggling with limited capacity** to provide care to all who need it. This is the reality we face in New York:

- While we have seen an investment of \$25 million in abortion provider support, there is a lack of sustained funding for ongoing workforce training and development. No funds address uncompensated care or support the logistical needs of low-income abortion patients.

---

<sup>1</sup> Kirstein, M., Dreweke, J., Jones, R., Philbin, J., "100 Days Post-Roe: At least 66 Clinics Across 15 US States Have Stopped Offering Abortion Care" (2022, October 6).

<https://www.guttmacher.org/2022/10/100-days-post-roe-least-66-clinics-across-15-us-states-have-stopped-offering-abortion-care>

<sup>2</sup> Guttmacher Institute, "Interactive Map: US Abortion Policies and Access After Roe" (2022, October 24) <https://states.guttmacher.org/policies/new-york/abortion-statistics>

<sup>3</sup> Rader B, Upadhyay UD, Sehgal NKR, Reis BY, Brownstein JS, Hswen Y. Estimated Travel Time and Spatial Access to Abortion Facilities in the US Before and After the *Dobbs v Jackson Women's Health* Decision. *JAMA*. Published online November 01, 2022. doi:10.1001/jama.2022.20424

<sup>4</sup> National Abortion Federation, "Four Months After the Fall of Roe, NAF Reports Ongoing Rise in Patients Traveling for Care" (2022, October 26) <https://prochoice.org/four-months-after-the-fall-of-roe-naf-reports-ongoing-rise-in-patients-traveling-for-care/>

- Abortion providers are finding it increasingly challenging to maintain staff in a competitive market given their limited resources. This limits access to care by increasing waiting times for appointments, delaying care, which can exacerbate existing health disparities and negatively impact health outcomes.
- Hospitals and hospital-based clinics continue to face severe staffing shortages and capacity issues. These providers need access to workforce training and development resources to ensure enhanced access to complex family planning services.

In the wake of *Roe v. Wade's* overturn, 22 million women of reproductive age live in states where abortion is banned or severely restricted.<sup>5</sup> As a result, there has already been a significant increase in need for travel funding to support patients seeking an abortion.<sup>6</sup> The Brigid Alliance, a New York-based practical support fund, experienced a 50% increase in the need for their services since the *Dobbs* decision. The New York Abortion Access Fund reported the distribution of more than 1 million dollars to assist patients with the costs of care as of October 2022, doubling the amount issued to abortion seekers in 2021.<sup>7</sup> Despite the increase in funds raised in the wake of the *Dobbs* decision, the National Network of Abortion Funds expects ongoing demand for financial assistance to outpace their capacity to offer monetary support.<sup>8</sup> Already, some of the nation's abortion funds have run out of money and had to stop issuing grants. The only way that sexual and reproductive health services, including abortion, in New York will remain available to all is if New York commits to long-term investments to support access. Passing A.361-B/S.348-B will ensure that New York State funding will continue to be a reliable source of support in the years ahead for abortion access.

Restrictions on abortion impact Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and rural communities most. Communities of color have suffered a long history of oppression in the United States. Our country's legacy of systemic racism and discrimination has led to lower wages,<sup>9</sup> lower rates of insurance coverage,<sup>10</sup> and lower access to quality health care overall for these groups.<sup>11</sup> Since *Roe* was overturned, 66 clinics across 15 states have stopped offering abortion services and 20 have closed completely.<sup>12</sup> With fewer facilities offering care, the lack of nearby providers forces pregnant individuals to overcome obstacles to care—like travel, childcare needs or lack of coverage for care—or to continue an unwanted or high-risk pregnancy. The lack of access to abortion, primary and preventive care needed to plan and support healthy pregnancies further exacerbates the already glaring and unacceptable health disparities we see in this country. The maternal mortality rate in the United States significantly outpaces other high-income countries, and Black women are three times more likely to die from a pregnancy-related cause than white women.<sup>13</sup> No one should have to risk their health or their life because they are unable to access the care they need. It is imperative that we build a sustained funding mechanism in New York focused on supporting patients and providers to ensure abortion access for all.

Decisions around pregnancy are deeply personal. Everyone deserves the freedom to make decisions surrounding their care without legal interference, and without regard to their financial status. To truly be an access state, New York must provide resources to ensure our providers have the capacity to offer care and patients have the necessary funds to overcome any obstacles they may encounter when seeking an abortion.

<sup>5</sup> Kirstein, M., Dreweke, J., Jones, R., Philbin, J., "100 Days Post-Roe: At least 66 Clinics Across 15 US States Have Stopped Offering Abortion Care" (2022, October 6).

<https://www.guttmacher.org/2022/10/100-days-post-roe-least-66-clinics-across-15-us-states-have-stopped-offering-abortion-care>

<sup>6</sup> National Abortion Federation. (2022, October 26) "Four Months After the Fall of Roe, NAF Reports Ongoing Rise in Patients Traveling for Care"

<https://prochoice.org/four-months-after-the-fall-of-roe-naf-reports-ongoing-rise-in-patients-traveling-for-care/>

<sup>7</sup> Davis, N., "No Matter Where You Live, New Yorkers Can Help You Get an Abortion (And We'll Pay for It, Too)" (2022, December 5)

<https://www.thecut.com/2022/12/new-yorkers-can-help-you-get-an-abortion.html>

<sup>8</sup> Rosalsky, G. "The fight to fund abortions in post-Roe America" (2022, July 5)

<https://www.npr.org/sections/money/2022/07/05/1109080841/the-fight-to-fund-abortions-in-post-roe-america>

<sup>9</sup> US Department of Labor, Earning Disparities by Race and Ethnicity. <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ofcpc/about/data/earnings/race-and-ethnicity>

<sup>10</sup> Artiga, S., Hill, L., Orgera K., Damico, A. "Health Coverage by Race and Ethnicity, 2010-2019."

<sup>11</sup> Buchmueller TC, Levy HG. "The ACA's Impact On Racial And Ethnic Disparities In Health Insurance Coverage And Access To Care." (2020, March) <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32119625/>

<sup>12</sup> Kirstein, M., Dreweke, J., Jones, R., Philbin, J., "100 Days Post-Roe: At least 66 Clinics Across 15 US States Have Stopped Offering Abortion Care" (2022, October 6).

<https://www.guttmacher.org/2022/10/100-days-post-roe-least-66-clinics-across-15-us-states-have-stopped-offering-abortion-care>

<sup>13</sup> Gunja, Munira Z. 'Health and Health Care for Women of Reproductive Age' (April 5, 2022)

<https://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/issue-briefs/2022/apr/health-and-health-care-women-reproductive-age>

Access to abortion and other reproductive care is already non-existent in many parts of the country—even for some people here in New York. **Now** is the time for New York to be bold. Our state must be a leader in the fight for abortion justice by advancing key policies to expand access for all. **To do this, the Reproductive Freedom and Equity Funding Program (A.361-B/S.348-B) must be included in your State of the State Address and in the Executive Budget.**

SIGNED,

Apiary for Practical Support

BKForge: Brooklyn for Reproductive and Gender Equity

The Brigid Alliance

Brooklyn Young Democrats

Central Brooklyn Independent Democrats

Downtown Women For Change

Girls for Gender Equity

GOBK by Day (Get Organized Brooklyn, by Day)

If/When/How Brooklyn Law School

Independent Neighborhood Democrats (IND Brooklyn)

Indivisible Brooklyn

League of Women Voters of New York State

NAPAWF

National Council of Jewish Women New York

New Kings Democrats

New York Civil Liberties Union

Planned Parenthood Empire State Acts

Reproductive Freedom For All NY Action Council

Women to the Front