



**Planned Parenthood of Northern New England Testimony on S.32, “An act relating to ranked-choice voting for presidential primary elections,” Senate Committee on Government Operations. February 1, 2023.**

Thank you for accepting written testimony. My name is Lucy Leriche and I’m the Vice President of Vermont Public Affairs at Planned Parenthood of Northern New England, or PPNNE.

PPNNE wishes to register our strong support for S.32. Thank you for your leadership in taking up the bill, and for doing all you can to strengthen our democracy.

PPNNE is the largest reproductive health care and sexuality education provider and advocate in northern New England with health centers in Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine.

There are seven PPNNE health centers in Vermont, and last year we served 16,000 patients in our state.

Our services include:

Abortion services; birth control; cervical, breast, colorectal, and other cancer screenings; erectile dysfunction treatment; follow up services for abnormal Pap tests and HPV; initial infertility work-up; miscarriage care; trans-inclusive health care, including gender affirming hormone therapy; STD testing and treatment, and prevention services; and well-person checkups, and more.

Real harm results from weakening and suppressing voter voices at the ballot box. Nearly 80% of US citizens believe abortion should be safe and legal, but widespread and extreme gerrymandering and voter suppression led to the election of Donald Trump, and ultimately to the loss of constitutionally protected abortion rights in the US. Since the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* last June, bans have eliminated access to all or some abortions in 18 states despite a majority of voters who support the right. More states could implement abortion bans this year. The consequences of these bans have been devastating for both patients and providers:

- The harmful effects of abortion bans stretch beyond abortion care. It’s now harder for people to get lifesaving medical care for miscarriages, ectopic pregnancies, and other pregnancy-related complications.
- Providers and medical staff in states with harsh consequences for people who perform or assist in abortions are [afraid to treat patients](#) — even in emergency situations. This puts the health and lives of pregnant people at risk, as providers are forced to delay urgently needed procedures until people are dangerously sick, so they can legally

provide care that meets the definition of “lifesaving” to ensure compliance with restrictive laws.

- We also know that anti-abortion rights lawmakers won't stop at banning abortion — they're working toward a broader agenda to roll back our rights and freedoms, from access to affordable birth control and to LGBTQ+ health care and more.

I'm here today to express PPNNE's appreciation and support for the passage of ranked-choice voting in presidential primaries in Vermont. This bill will further strengthen and expand our democracy because it will more accurately capture the will of the people, so that all voices can truly be heard and respected. Ranked choice voting will help to include the voices that are currently not being heard beyond our current 2-party dominant system.

Given the fragile condition of our democracy nationally, it is critical that our state take every available opportunity to ensure all voices are heard, and that our precious value of majority rule is maintained.

We are proud to live in a state where our elected leaders are eager and determined to ensure all votes count, and every voice is heard.

Thank you.