



TO: SENATOR SEARS, CHAIR OF THE SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE, AND ALL ESTEEMED MEMBERS OF THE VERMONT SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

Written Testimony **IN SUPPORT OF H.89**, An act relating to civil and criminal procedures concerning legally protected health care activity. Drafted by students at the University of Vermont.¹

We, the student members of Planned Parenthood Generation Action at the University of Vermont, are writing to urge our support of H.89. We are a student organization with over 2,000 on-campus members and by association 2,000 Vermont constituents. We are saddened that it has become the responsibility of groups like ours to advocate at the state level for what, for 50 years, was a constitutionally protected right. However, being from both Vermont and a collection of other US states, your decision on this bill is of utmost importance to our health and well-being both when we are in Vermont pursuing our education, and when we are visiting our families in hometowns and states during academic breaks.

We ask you to bear in mind that in 2014 the Guttmacher Institute reported that the largest age share of individuals seeking abortions was 18-24 years of age, the age of college students.² Now that national access to reproductive healthcare has been restricted in many states, a significant proportion of Vermont students can *only* attain lifesaving reproductive healthcare while in the state of Vermont.

Vermont, by nature of being a small population, is unique in that a majority of UVM students (65%) come from out of state. **We encourage you to look at the attached maps depicting UVM student location demographics and abortion restrictions nationally, you will notice an unfortunate overlap between states that have banned abortion and the home states of many UVM students.**

What H.89 looks like in application for students like us, is that if a UVM student from, say Texas had to seek an abortion while at college in Vermont and their parents or acquaintances in Texas find out and seek to prosecute them or their Vermont provider for this action based on Texas' strict law, H.89 would protect both the patient and the Vermont provider from having to involve themselves in the Texas investigation. Unfortunately, if the student returned home to Texas they would have to comply with that investigation while at home, and like other pro-choice groups you heard from, we would be in support of amendments or future legislation looking to address this though we understand the legal complications.

I want to share some perspective on this issue from a college organization as we know you likely don't have student witnesses often and this is our first time testifying on H.89.

¹ This testimony does not reflect the views of the University of Vermont as an institution, but instead the views of the individual members of the UVM Planned Parenthood Generation Action student organization. Drafted by students in PPGA.

²<https://www.guttmacher.org/news-release/2017/abortion-common-experience-us-women-despite-dramatic-declines-rates>

Planned Parenthood Generation Action UVM

College is notorious for being a period of sexual experimentation for young consenting adults. Part of our role in PPGA is to offer safe sex education and supplies on campus and while we have learned there is nothing that will stop college students from having intercourse, it's important to make sure there are as few medical or emotional consequences as possible.

I think there is a preconceived notion that due to all the fun college students have, and the majority in favor of the right to choose, we take the possibility of pregnancy lightly. There have been comments made to us by opponents of our stance that they don't want to see abortion become another form of birth control. What our opponents don't expect is that we agree. Abortion is a serious medical procedure, much less than giving birth but significant enough that we don't wish for anyone to have one if at all avoidable before the fact. While we think access to abortion should be open and shameless we are by no means close to glorifying the practice.

Sexually active individuals who aren't looking to get pregnant live in a constant anxiety cycle surrounding menstruation. I'm sure you have all heard of "pregnancy scares" when a period is late or a cycle is skipped, and being in college there is not a person I have spoken to that doesn't know someone who's anxiously had to purchase and take a pregnancy test hoping for negative, including many of our members and executive board. We all also know someone who has disclosed their experience with needing to seek an abortion and the opportunity provided to them not needing to care for a child before they were financially or emotionally ready. Think about the college-aged students in your life, children or grandchildren, and ask if you think they are ready to be parents right now.

Vermont could benefit in a very tragic way from having these protections. Especially for college students who are looking for where to start their adult lives, healthcare security is important to us and Vermont can provide that if they pass H.89. In conversations with roommates and friends at UVM I have heard an increased interest in living in Vermont post-graduation as a result of Vermont's passage of the RLA and similar healthcare protection policies.

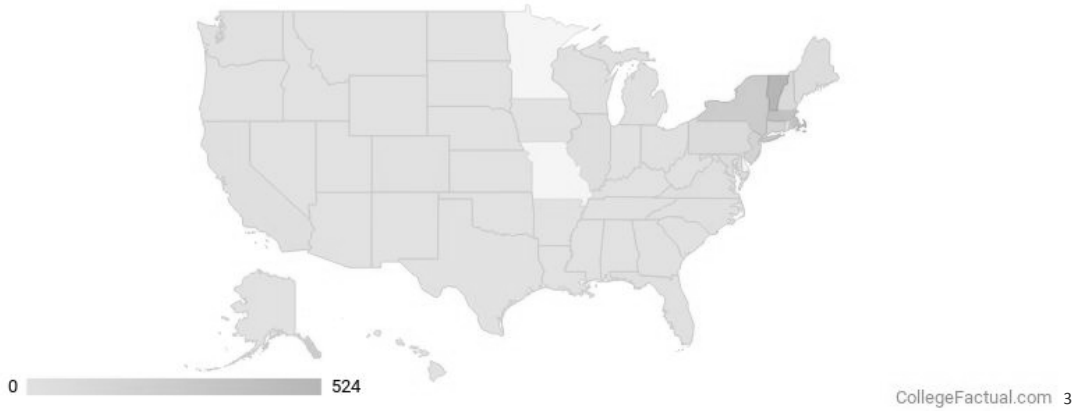
Shield law protections are so important for those of us who do want to visit home for extended periods without the risk of legal consequences for personal healthcare decisions we've made at college. We entreat you not to overlook your transient constituents. Proving to be a leader in reproductive healthcare could be the difference between transient and permanent young Vermonters.

Signed,

The student Members of Planned Parenthood Generation Action at the University of Vermont

Represented to your committee by Aubrey Weaver (she/her), engagement and outreach chair of PPGA, Class of 2025.

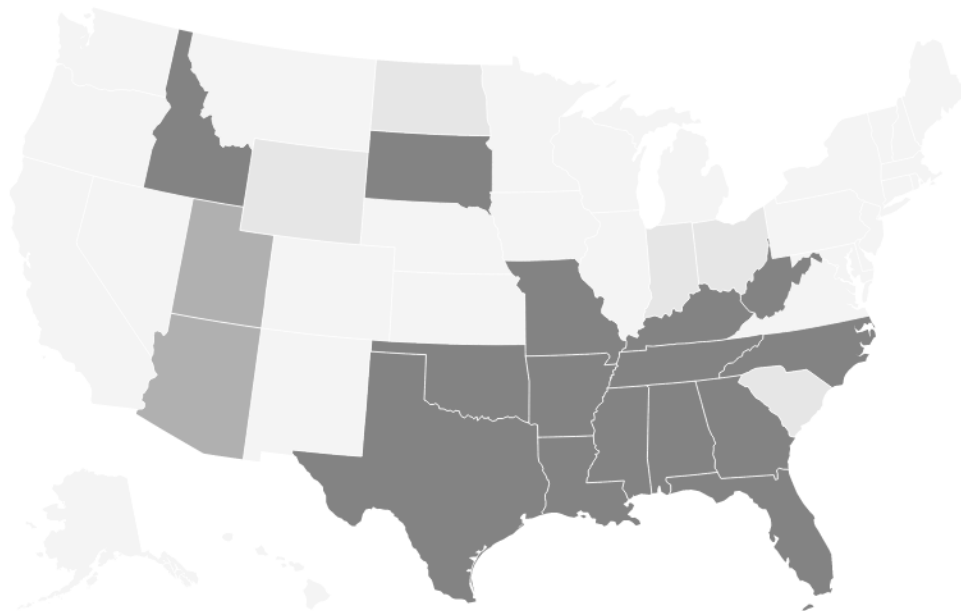
University of Vermont Students Geographic Diversity Breakdown



Status of abortion bans in the U.S.

As of Jan. 5, 2023

Abortion ban blocked Mixed ban status Abortion banned or restricted



4

³ Source: College Factual

<https://www.collegefactual.com/colleges/university-of-vermont/student-life/diversity/#:~:text=UVM%20ranks%20241%20out%20of,from%20out%20of%20the%20country.>

⁴ Source: Axios <https://www.axios.com/2022/06/25/abortion-illegal-7-states-more-bans-coming>