

To the Vermont State House Legislature:

My name is Dayna, and I am a registered nurse. I support women in the process of obtaining abortion, and I care for them afterward. The reasons for their seeking an abortion are many and diverse: an incomplete miscarriage, a severe genetic defect, an unplanned pregnancy, and more. In each of these cases, the choice to seek an abortion came about as part of a conversation between the woman and her health care provider. This choice should not be regulated by any person outside of that relationship, and we should trust people to be able to determine what is best for their body, their health, and their future.

House Bill 57 is not opening the door to a 'Wild West' policy of abortion as its opponents would have us believe. It is simply codifying current federal law and practice into state law, preserving the rights that women in Vermont currently have and absolutely deserve. Less restrictive state and federal policies around abortion can ensure that women who decide to have an abortion can obtain it earlier in their pregnancy.

According to the Guttmacher Institute, 75% of abortion patients in 2014 were poor or low-income: 26% of patients had incomes of 100-199% of the federal poverty level, while 49% had incomes of less than 100% of the federal poverty level. The reasons that people give for having an abortion underscores their understanding of the responsibilities of parenthood and family life. The three most common reasons, each cited by three-fourths of patients, were concern for their responsibility to other individuals; the inability to afford raising a child; and the belief that having a baby would interfere with school or the ability to care for dependents. Restrictive abortion policies disproportionately affect low-income communities and people of color, perpetuating a system of discrimination and marginalization.

The right to an abortion must be preserved, as should the right to comprehensive and holistic sex education and access to affordable contraception to help prevent unplanned pregnancies. As a state, we have the opportunity not only to preserve that right, but to then work to improve access to abortion and other reproductive health services, including STI prevention and care, adequate prenatal and pregnancy care, domestic violence assistance, adequate wages to support planned families, and so much more. Women have the human right to decide whether, when, and how to have and parent children, with dignity and free from discrimination, coercion, or violence.