

# VERMONT LEGAL AID, INC.

## OFFICE OF THE HEALTH CARE ADVOCATE

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February 6, 2019

To: House Committee on Human Services

Re: Support for H. 57 An act relating to preserving the right to abortion

The Office of the Health Care Advocate supports all Vermonters with accessing health care and health insurance. Our advocates are available to work with any Vermonter who experiences issues accessing care, and we represent the public in a wide range of health care policy arenas. We are writing to express our strong support for H.57 An act relating to preserving the right to abortion.

Safe, legal abortion is an essential part of comprehensive reproductive health care. Abortion is a normal and common part of health care—nearly a quarter of American women will have an abortion by age 45.<sup>1</sup> Our office's role is to ensure that access to health care is preserved or improved for all Vermonters. Codifying Vermont's currently available abortion services in state law is an important step for ensuring continued access to this important component of health care.

Vermonters must continue to have access to the full spectrum of reproductive health care services. Abortion is a personal decision that must remain between a patient and their health care provider. Restrictions on abortion are not evidence-based and cause harm. Research consistently demonstrates that lack of abortion access has a negative effect on health and wellbeing and magnifies inequality in health care based on race, gender identity, and economic status.<sup>2,3,4</sup> Around the country, abortion restrictions have caused clinics to close and have created barriers to abortion access that disproportionately affect low-income women, women of color, and women in rural areas. These are the same women that often experience barriers to accessing contraception and the full spectrum of reproductive health care.<sup>5,6</sup>

Whether to continue a pregnancy is a personal decision that every pregnant person should be able to make regardless of socio-economic status, race, or geographic location. All Vermonters should have access to the full spectrum of health care services, including abortion, without barriers. We believe this legislation is necessary to protect Vermonters from attacks on their health care and to ensure that future generations have access to the same health care services that have been available in Vermont for more than four decades.

We ask you to support H. 57.

Sincerely,

Mike Fisher, Chief Health Care Advocate

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<sup>1</sup>Rachel K. Jones, Jenna Jerman, "Population Group Abortion Rates and Lifetime Incidence of Abortion: United States, 2008–2014". American Journal of Public Health 107, no. 12 (December 1, 2017): pp. 1904-1909.

<sup>2</sup>Roberts, Sarah C M et al. "A 21st-Century Public Health Approach to Abortion". American journal of public health vol. 107,12 (2017): 1878-1882.

<sup>3</sup>Roberts SC, Biggs MA, Chibber KS, Gould H, Rocca CH, Foster DG. "Risk of violence from the man involved in the pregnancy after receiving or being denied an abortion". BMC Med. 2014;12:144.

<sup>4</sup>Raymond EG, Grimes DA. "The comparative safety of legal induced abortion and childbirth in the United States". Obstet Gynecol. 2012;119(2 pt 1):215–219.

<sup>5</sup>Gerdt, Caitlin et al. "Impact of Clinic Closures on Women Obtaining Abortion Services After Implementation of a Restrictive Law in Texas" American journal of public health vol. 106,5 (2016): 857-64.

<sup>6</sup>Dehlendorf, Christine et al. "Disparities in family planning". American journal of obstetrics and gynecology vol. 202,3 (2010): 214-20.