

Legislation Text

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Declaring the City of Philadelphia's commitment to protect and expand reproductive rights and abortion access in the face of extraordinary threats, and authorizing a task force to advance recommendations and coordinate initiatives to ensure that all Philadelphians as well as those who seek care here are able to exercise their fundamental right to bodily autonomy.

WHEREAS, Abortion is healthcare, and access to a safe and affordable abortion is a human right; and

WHEREAS, Most Americans support legal access to abortion and generations have relied upon abortions to ensure the physical and mental well-being of themselves and their families. However, in a radical act of politicized jurisprudence, the Supreme Court reversed *Roe v. Wade* and stripped away the nearly 50-year-old federal constitutional protection for abortion; and

WHEREAS, Anti-abortion lawmakers across the country are taking advantage of the Supreme Court's abandonment of abortion rights to further enact a multitude of abortion restrictions and bans. In a horrifying violation of legal norms and constitutional rights, some of these laws aim to criminalize and punish abortion seekers and healthcare providers with respect to abortions performed in states where the procedures are legal; and

WHEREAS, Anti-abortion lawmakers in Harrisburg are likewise seeking to further restrict or ban abortions in Pennsylvania. After a middle-of-the-night vote, the Pennsylvania legislature passed a bill as part of a process seeking to remove abortion rights from the Pennsylvania Constitution by referendum as early as Spring 2023; and

WHEREAS, In the face of these looming threats, Philadelphia's city and state-level elected leaders have spoken out against efforts to strip away these critical rights. Mayor Kenney's administration has led public education events and published an action guide to provide accurate information and direction for how residents can mobilize to protect abortion access, and has dedicated \$500,000 in local funding for emergency assistance for those facing financial obstacles to accessing abortion care; and

WHEREAS, If abortion is further restricted or even banned in Pennsylvania, Philadelphians will suffer especially dire consequences. The denial of an abortion can have immense socioeconomic effects, particularly for those already facing economic difficulties, leading to significantly higher rates of bankruptcies, evictions, and court judgments. Abortion restrictions will also exacerbate our City's already marked racial inequality. The mortality rate among Black people who are pregnant is already four times higher than the rate for those who are white, with Black women making up 73% of pregnancy-related deaths in one recent study, and studies show that abortion bans only increase this unjust divide; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia is already facing a surge of out-of-state patients seeking abortion services due to abortion bans in their home states, straining the limited resources of providers and advocates in Pennsylvania, a problem that will likely grow as more states limit or ban reproductive services; and

WHEREAS, Local providers of abortion services and those seeking abortions routinely face death threats, bomb scares, online and in-person harassment, physical threats, and abuse by increasingly emboldened anti-abortion extremists; and

WHEREAS, It is critical that we do all we can to protect those who seek, provide, and support abortions, and to expand access to abortion; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the Council of the City of Philadelphia declares the City of Philadelphia's commitment to protect and expand reproductive rights and abortion access in the face of extraordinary threats, and to ensure that all Philadelphians as well as those who seek care here are able to exercise their fundamental right to bodily autonomy.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That no City resources shall be used to further any investigation, proceeding, or prosecution that aims to criminalize or penalize those who seek or provide abortion services unless legally required.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the City shall work with local healthcare institutions to advance best practices to guard against criminal or civil liability for those providing or seeking abortions, take appropriate steps to limit its collection and retention of sensitive information related to abortion and other sexual and reproductive healthcare services, and use all efforts to ensure that any information in its possession cannot be used to personally identify abortion seekers or providers.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That additional and concerted efforts shall be made to safeguard abortion clinics and providers from harassment and violence in order to protect the safety and well-being of those who bravely provide crucial reproductive services to Philadelphians, and to ensure those seeking abortions can do so freely and safely.

FURTHER RESOLVED, The City shall continue and deepen its efforts to fund and expand access to abortion, particularly for those who cannot afford abortion services or are denied the ability to use their insurance to cover costs, and to support clinics providing critical reproductive healthcare services.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That a comprehensive educational campaign is needed to accurately inform Philadelphians about their abortion rights, and about how and where they can access safe reproductive healthcare including contraception and abortion services, including support with funding.

FURTHER RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Authorizes the creation of a Task Force to advance recommendations and coordinate initiatives to protect and expand reproductive rights and abortion access in each of the aforementioned areas of priority, consisting of representatives from: the Philadelphia City Council, including the Chair of City Council's Committee on Public Health and Human Services; Mayor Kenney's administration, including the Philadelphia Department of Public Health, the Philadelphia Law Department, the Philadelphia Police Department, the Office of the Deputy Managing Director for Health and Human Services, and any additional relevant city offices and departments; and key community stakeholders especially those with lived experiences and expertise relevant to this work, including abortion providers and medical institutions, advocates for reproductive and civil rights, foundations with expertise and capacity to fund initiatives in public health and reproductive rights, and others with relevant experience or expertise.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Task Force shall convene within 30 days of its creation and shall meet at

least quarterly. The Task Force will hold at least one public meeting in order to receive feedback and provide updates on its progress.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That all City Departments, Agencies, Boards, and Commissions shall cooperate with the Task Force, and provide any data it may require. Other public entities, along with the private sector, are encouraged to support and cooperate with the Task Force.