

Legislation Text

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Declaring Philadelphia's commitment to protecting and expanding access to abortion and reproductive healthcare through the establishment of a Reproductive Rights Taskforce in the wake of increasingly severe attacks on the fundamental right to bodily autonomy.

WHEREAS, Access to a safe and affordable abortion is a human right, and in a time of unprecedented attacks against those who seek and provide reproductive healthcare, the City of Philadelphia must continue to take comprehensive action to protect and expand access to needed care; and

WHEREAS, Extreme anti-abortion activists are seeking to ban medication abortions, filing an unprecedented lawsuit to revoke the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) decades-old determination that taking Mifepristone and Misoprostol is a safe and effective protocol to end pregnancy; and

WHEREAS, It is estimated that in 2020, medication abortions involving Mifepristone and Misoprostol accounted for over half of all abortions in the United States, and experts say the pills are as safe as the over-the-counter painkiller ibuprofen; and

WHEREAS, Medication abortions are generally less expensive than procedures, and provide a lifeline for those who cannot easily travel to abortion clinics; and

WHEREAS, In April 2023, a radically conservative judge in Texas, for the first time in U.S. history, revoked the FDA's approval of medication abortions; and

WHEREAS, While the Supreme Court later preserved access to the drug while the lawsuit winds through the courts, at least two Supreme Court justices stated they would revoke access to the drug, and the case will likely reach the deeply conservative court for a final adjudication; and

WHEREAS, A ruling against the FDA approval of Mifepristone would force millions of Americans to use a less effective and more painful medical abortion protocol or to flock to already near-capacity abortion clinics, sometimes hundreds of miles away; and

WHEREAS, The unprecedented attack on the nation-wide availability of pills for medication abortions fits into a larger pattern of extremist attacks on bodily autonomy and the freedom of movement, with Attorneys General and high ranking law enforcement officers, including the Attorney General of Alabama, openly talking about the prosecution of those who seek or help others seek reproductive care in locations where it is legal; and

WHEREAS, The physical attacks on those who provide and seek abortion care has become even more dangerous and violent; local providers face death threats, bomb scares, online and in-person harassment, physical threats, and abuse by increasingly emboldened anti-abortion extremists, hindering access to reproductive care and forcing clinics to spend more and more of their limited budget on security; and

WHEREAS, The denial or hinderance 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; and

WHEREAS, Limitations on abortion care will also exacerbate our City's already significant racial inequality as 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 abortion restrictions have been proven to only increase this divide; and

WHEREAS, In the aftermath of the reversal of *Roe v. Wade*, Philadelphia and Pennsylvania have taken powerful steps to protect and expand access to abortions and reproductive healthcare; and

WHEREAS, Last year, Philadelphia City Council passed a series of bills, which constituted some of the most innovative and powerful pieces of municipal legislation in the nation to protect providers and patients; Mayor Kenney's administration has led public education events and published an action guide to protect abortion access, and in 2022 dedicated \$500,000 in local funding for emergency assistance for those facing financial obstacles to accessing abortion care; and Governor Shapiro took bold action to stop state funding for anti-abortion counseling centers after 30 years; and

WHEREAS, While the action by City and State leaders has been powerful, amid unprecedented attacks on the right to bodily autonomy, we must continue to take bold and innovative action to support those who seek and provide abortions in Philadelphia; and

WHEREAS, We must ensure that all possible tools of City government are used in a effective and coordinated manner to counter threats to bodily autonomy and expand and protect access to abortion and reproductive care in Philadelphia; and

WHEREAS, Establishing a Reproductive Rights Taskforce to bring together providers, patients, experts and advocates along with City officials and elected leaders to coordinate government actions and advance recommendations is a necessary and vital step to protect and expand access to abortion and reproductive care in Philadelphia; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA hereby declares Philadelphia's commitment to protecting and expanding access to abortion and reproductive healthcare through the establishment of a Reproductive Rights Taskforce in the wake of increasingly severe attacks on the fundamental right to bodily autonomy.