



September 15, 2021

Mayor Wheeler, Commissioner Hardesty, Commissioner Rubio, Commissioner Ryan, and Commissioner Mapps.

Thank you for inviting us to come here today.

My name is Beth Vial and I am a member of the board of directors for the Northwest Abortion Access Fund. For those of you who may be less familiar, The Northwest Abortion Access Fund is your local abortion fund serving Oregon, Washington, Alaska, and Idaho. Our mission is to fund abortion and break down barriers to abortion access for people seeking care in the Northwest. We help people pay for their abortion, help people get to and from the clinic, and we make sure people traveling for care have a safe place to stay. Trained, compassionate volunteer advocates run our toll-free hotline, and we move over \$350,000 each year to people in our region and those traveling to our region, who are facing logistical barriers to accessing abortion. We are a 501(c)3 nonprofit and a member of the National Network of Abortion Funds, a membership organization of over 70 funds across the United States. Abortion funds grew out of a need to step in where elected officials have failed, with policies that ban abortion coverage or don't provide adequate funding for this care.

The last time I testified to the City Council was in 2019, shortly after the appointment of Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh. I spoke in support of the resolution to file amicus briefs in opposition to state abortion bans, shared my abortion story, and made a request for the City to consider investing in abortion funds. That year our abortion fund colleagues in New York City had successfully worked with their local government to make an historic investment of \$250,000 in their state's abortion fund, and shortly after that Austin, Texas made a similar investment in their local abortion fund. What I said in my testimony then still rings true today, "the fight to protect abortion access is more important than ever. We cannot do this work without you."

I am grateful for City Council recognizing this, and for our partners Pro-Choice Oregon, Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon, All Above All, and the National Institute for Reproductive Health for recognizing that allocating municipal funding to local abortion funds is one of the most important and impactful ways that a city can support abortion access.

I know what it's like to have to travel for healthcare, and not be able to sleep in my own bed

after an abortion, because of political opposition. The Northwest Abortion Access Fund was critical for me being able to access my abortion, which cost \$10,000 after being lied to and delayed by crisis pregnancy centers. I had to fly over 1,000 miles to an abortion provider who would provide me care, not unlike what Texans are facing. By investing in the Northwest Abortion Access Fund, the City of Portland is manifesting opposition to abortion bans and supporting people seeking healthcare.

Following the Texas abortion ban, our calls from Texas have increased by 400%. We anticipate that number will climb, and we will have more callers from throughout the country, as states across the nation seek to enact bans that copy Texas, and the Supreme Court overturns past precedents establishing a constitutional right to abortion. This situation is an emergency, and while we are in the most pro-choice state in the country, it is imperative that we lead at all levels of government to expand access to abortion care before more bans are enacted.

Each of us should be able to live, work, and make decisions about our future with dignity and respect. Someone who can make decisions about their health care - including whether to become a parent, has more control over their economic security. We need policies that help put everyone on equal economic footing. And with this resolution, we're reimagining a society where everyone is able to receive the abortion care they need and create their families without barriers, fear, or interference from others. A society that leads with compassion and puts our families' health, safety, and real-life needs first.

This resolution cannot pass soon enough. For these aforementioned reasons, I urge you to support this critical resolution to fund abortion access here in Portland and across the country.

Sincerely,

Beth Vial
Board Member
Northwest Abortion Access Fund

