
Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon

September 15, 2021

Mayor Wheeler and Commissioners Hardesty, Rubio, Ryan, and Mapps:

Planned Parenthood Advocate of Oregon strongly supports the City of Portland's resolution to take meaningful and forward-thinking action in opposition to the State of Texas's extreme abortion ban, which the Supreme Court allowed to go into effect earlier this month despite its blatant unconstitutionality and immense public opposition and outrage.

Senate Bill 8 was drafted with incredible, purposeful cruelty and designed for maximum harm. The law not only bans abortion after six weeks (before many even know they are pregnant), it deputizes private individuals to sue anyone who performs the procedure or "aids and abets," effectively placing a \$10,000 bounty on abortion providers and/or people who helped others get care.

Abortion bans are inherently racist, classist, ableist, and misogynistic. Due to structural racism and inequities, abortion bans like Texas' law disproportionately harm Black, Brown, and Indigenous people, LGBTQ+ people, people with low incomes, and those living in rural areas. By allowing private individuals to police and profit from infringing upon other people's bodily autonomy, this law not only incentivizes abortion bounty hunters it sets a dangerous precedent that could lead other states down a dark path.

Each year Planned Parenthood health centers serve over 60,000 Oregonians. Planned Parenthood of the Columbia Willamette operates two Portland health centers, and throughout the entire pandemic, they never closed their doors or interrupted the provision of essential services, like abortion care. In 2020, a year of quarantine and lock-down, those Portland health centers had 23,798 visits including cancer and STI screenings, family planning, gender-affirming care, and abortion.

These health centers have long worked to expand access to care through innovations like tele-medication abortions. Now, our health centers are stepping up and preparing to care for more patients who have been and will be forced to leave their hostile states to receive the healthcare they need. Yet even today many patients who come through our clinic doors face incredible obstacles and barriers to accessing abortion care, including those who cannot afford the procedure because their federal health insurance plans won't cover it, those who receive care via Indian Health Services, and those who need to travel long distances, due to a lack of providers in rural communities or whose only healthcare providers are religiously affiliated.

It often falls to an incredible network of abortion access funds, such as the Northwest Abortion Access Funds, to connect patients with critical support and funds so they can access the care they need. NWAAF works with patients to pay for their travel, lodging, childcare, and medical expenses. The huge gaps and limitations of mere legality are exposed every day on their calls with individuals who are navigating so much to access abortion care. NWAAF fields requests from around the country, but also allocates a significant number of grants to people living in Portland for whom abortion care would be out of reach if not for NWAAF's help.

We cannot underscore enough how significant—both in symbol and in impact—it is that the city has included within this resolution an investment into building a stronger infrastructure to support abortion patients. The resolution's \$200,000 will bolster the existing abortion network through direct support of the abortion access funds who work tirelessly to connect abortion patients with the care they need.

SB 8 comes forward as the Supreme Court is slated to hear the Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization case, a 15-week abortion ban out of Mississippi that could gut Roe vs. Wade. It is not a hyperbole to say that these two laws and cases could radically alter abortion access and rights for years to come. This full-scale assault on reproductive rights and bodily autonomy is the culmination of a decades-long nationally coordinated effort to ban abortion.

In this moment, the response must be innovative, visionary, and coordinated. The investment of \$200,000 is forward-looking leadership that anticipates that Texas is the beginning not the end. As more statewide abortion bans are poised to be adopted in other states and as the trigger laws, like the one in Idaho, could go into effect, the city of Portland is strategically and wisely investing in shoring up the abortion network and infrastructure, so we can deftly handle the influx of people who will need assistance.

We appreciate Portland City Council's commitment to acting in the face of these unprecedented attacks on healthcare and bodily autonomy. We applaud the City Council for hearing the feedback from the reproductive rights and reproductive justice advocates groups on the ground in Texas who have communicated that the most meaningful support at this time is investing money directly into helping the Texans who have been most impacted by this abortion ban.

Oregon and Portland already serve as a critical access point for people from out of state, including neighboring Idaho and beyond. Today, PPAO proudly supports the City Council's resolution and response to Texas's egregious law. Portland is meeting the cruelty of S.B. 8 with compassion and the mutual aid and support that will be critical to Texans seeking care outside of their hostile state, to Portlanders who struggle to access care due to economic insecurity, and to many others throughout the Pacific Northwest whose access to care hangs by a thread.

Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon urges your support of this resolution.

Sincerely,

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Executive Director
Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon