



Proposal to Support Abortion Access in Austin

Background

The Austin City Council has a long history of boldly supporting reproductive rights. With their passage of “Rosie’s Resolution” (2018) and the “Abortion is Healthcare” resolution (2017), the Mayor and Council Members affirmed abortion as a critical form of reproductive health care and uplifted the importance of comprehensive coverage of abortion care—denouncing racist and classist coverage bans. Most recently, Council unanimously passed a resolution to study the impact of a possible boycott of the state of Alabama in response to the state’s passage of an abortion ban.

This support for abortion access is critical, as anti-abortion politicians in Texas have been passing restrictions on abortion access for decades, putting care especially out of reach for marginalized communities. This year, we have seen an unprecedented wave of new state and local laws in the South that are intended to effectively outlaw abortion, usually by banning abortion very early in pregnancy, before most people know they are pregnant. These unconstitutional early abortion bans are intended as a direct challenge to *Roe v. Wade*.

Just this week, Mineral Wells, a small city in north Texas, became the second in the state to introduce a city-wide ordinance banning abortion. The mayor of Mineral Wells said he was inspired by the city council in Waskom, which in June unanimously passed a similar ordinance.

In this moment of crisis, the time is now for the Austin City Council to take the next steps in strong support of abortion access in our city and our region.

Austin-based grassroots organizations Lilith Fund and NARAL Pro-Choice Texas, with support from the National Institute for Reproductive Health and the Equity Agenda, are bringing a comprehensive proactive policy proposal to the Austin City Council for consideration. The items in this proposal were compiled during a stakeholder feedback process that included engagement with the following local direct service organization: Planned Parenthood Greater Texas, Fund Texas Choice, The Bridge Collective, Whole Woman’s Health Alliance, Austin Women’s Health Center, Jane’s Due Process, and Mama Sana Vibrant Woman. The recommendations are also informed by the National Institute for Reproductive Health’s [Local Reproductive Freedom Index](#), a 2017 report that evaluated 40 cities based on their policies

related to reproductive health, rights, and justice. [Austin](#) received a score of 3 stars, out of a possible 5 stars.

Alignment with City priorities

- [City of Austin Strategic Direction 2023](#)
 - Economic opportunity and affordability
 - Health and environment
 - Government that works for all

An omnibus resolution affirming Austin is a supportive and welcoming city for people seeking abortion care. This resolution will proclaim:

- Abortion is still legal in all 50 states and in every city. Regardless of recent attempts to ban abortion on local and state levels, Austin continues to be a welcoming and safe place for people to get the reproductive health care they need, including abortion.
- City of Austin recognizes March 10 as Abortion Providers Appreciation Day
- City of Austin does not tolerate terrorism against or intimidation of abortion providers, patients, and clinics.
- City of Austin directs City Manager to bring back land development code amendments as needed that ensure clinics providing inpatient procedures are a permitted use in all commercial based and multifamily base districts, including all subdistricts (TODs, small area plans, etc.) and consider options to minimize site restrictions like minimum parking requirements.

A non-discrimination ordinance that prohibits employment discrimination on the basis of reproductive health decisions

- The Reproductive Health Non-Discrimination Act protects individuals from being fired or facing other repercussions in the workplace because of decisions around their reproductive health. There have been a number of disturbing examples across the country of employers discriminating against employees because of their reproductive health decisions, such as using in vitro fertilization or birth control.
- In this current climate of attacks on abortion, this protection is needed more than ever. People need to know that accessing the abortion care they need – especially if it requires taking time off to travel long-distances to reach a provider – won't jeopardize their job security.
- Washington, DC passed a [similar ordinance](#) in 2015 and St. Louis passed a [similar ordinance](#) in 2017.
 - In October 2018, a federal judge determined that it could not be applied to three religious organizations.
- The National Women's Law Center is working on a version that addresses legal concerns related to the St. Louis ordinance.
- [HB 1478](#) was introduced during the 86(R) and received a hearing in International Relationships and Economic Development, but was left pending.

City of Austin funding— contracted out through the Public Health Department—will be allocated to support people accessing abortion care in Austin. Although direct funding for abortion care, as was recently established in [New York City](#), is prohibited in Texas, patients seeking abortion must overcome tremendous logistical and financial barriers to accessing care. Funding to Austin-based direct services organization will be directed to the following:

- Logistical support
 - Transportation to and from abortion clinics
 - Hotel accommodations for overnight stays necessary for abortion procedures
 - Childcare support or reimbursements
- Accommodations for lost wages
 - Direct financial assistance to patients who forgo wages (or who are denied paid sick days) to obtain abortion care
- Post-abortion support
 - Overhead and administrative costs for organizations whose staff provide post-abortion doula, counseling, and/or emotional support services

Another possibility is for the Public Health Department to allocate resources—whether funding and/or advertising space—to educate the public about the harms of anti-abortion “crisis pregnancy centers” (CPCs) and where they can access comprehensive and unbiased reproductive health care.

Contacts

Amanda Beatriz Williams, Lilith Fund, Executive Director
amanda@lilithfund.org, 281-797-7944

Aimee Arrambide, NARAL Pro-Choice Texas, Executive Director
aimee@prochoicetexas.org, 512-587-5692