

Duckworth, Murray Introduce Legislation To Defend Reproductive And Sexual Healthcare

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WASHINGTON, DC – U.S. Senators Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) and Patty Murray (D-WA), Chair of the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions, today introduced a resolution opposing the criminalization of the full range of reproductive and sexual healthcare, including abortion, gender-affirming care and contraceptive care. The resolution also disapproves of the criminalization of pregnancy outcomes.

“All Americans, regardless of gender, income, race or zip code, deserve to have access to healthcare, including the full range of reproductive healthcare and gender-affirming care,” said Duckworth. “As we await what could be a disastrous ruling from the Supreme Court rolling back reproductive rights for millions, Republicans across the nation are also pushing forward bills that would throw patients and doctors in jail for seeking or providing care. We must do more to protect every person’s access to full reproductive care, which is why I’m proud to introduce this resolution with my colleagues.”

“No one should ever face time in prison for seeking the essential health care they need, for providing that care, or for simply helping a friend or family member access it—period, end of story. It’s outrageous this resolution is even necessary—but Republican lawmakers across the country are going to remarkable lengths to criminalize essential

health care and actually charge or jail patients and providers,” said Murray. “Criminalizing abortion and other essential care is downright dangerous—and threatens the lives of patients who need care but will be too afraid to get it. As Republicans continue to attack reproductive rights and equality for all, Democrats are using every tool at our disposal to fight back.”

“Someone you know, someone in your family, or someone you love currently relies on or will need abortion, contraception, gender-affirming care, or other essential health care. I worked on the frontlines of reproductive health care and saw the sacrifices people made to get the care they needed. Criminalizing people who need or who provide reproductive health care won’t save lives. Criminalizing reproductive health care services puts them out of reach for many millions of people in marginalized communities,” said Congresswoman Williams, Whip of the Democratic Women’s Caucus, and a member of the Congressional Pro-Choice Caucus.

U.S. Senators Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Ben Cardin (D-MD), Chris Murphy (D-CT), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Ed Markey (D-MA), Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Ron Wyden (D-OR), Alex Padilla (D-CA), Gary Peters (D-MI), Mazie Hirono (D-HI), Tina Smith (D-MN) and Martin Heinrich (D-NM) are original cosponsors of the resolution. Congresswoman Nikema Williams (D-GA-05), joined by 115 of her House colleagues, [introduced](#) identical legislation in the House of Representatives in May.

Several states have taken steps to enact laws that have been used to criminalize pregnancy outcomes and curtail access to abortion, contraception and gender-affirming care. In light of the leaked memo suggesting that the Supreme Court is ready to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, this resolution is more important than ever and would help ensure all Americans will be able to access the full range of sexual and reproductive healthcare they may need, without fear of retaliation.

Specifically, the resolution:

- Condemns the misapplication of criminal laws to punish people for the outcomes of their pregnancies;
- Affirms that people deserve access to high-quality healthcare without fear of reprisal or punishment;
- Condemns the criminalization of providing essential healthcare;
- Affirms the ethical obligations of healthcare providers to safeguard patient privacy;
- Declares a vision for a future where access to abortion, contraception and gender-affirming care is free from restrictions and bans universally, and people are able to manage care on their own free from discrimination or punishment; and

- Affirms Congress' commitment to work towards this goal in partnerships with providers, patients, advocates and their communities.

Full text of the resolution [here](#).

More than 151 groups support this resolution, including: Physicians for Reproductive Health, National Center for Transgender Equality, Planned Parenthood, NARAL, All* Above All Action Fund, Black Mamas Matter Alliance, Center for Reproductive Rights, Human Rights Watch, Ipas, National Advocates for Pregnant Women, National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum, National Council of Jewish Women, National Immigration Law Center, National Latina Institute for Reproductive Justice, National Organization for Women, National Partnership for Women & Families, National Women's Health Network, National Women's Law Center, Physician's Action Network, Power to Decide, Repro-action and Transgender Law Center. [Click here](#) for the full list of endorsing organizations.

Duckworth has made protecting and expanding access to essential women's healthcare a top priority as a Senator. Last year, President Biden [signed](#) Duckworth's bipartisan *Protecting Moms Who Served Act* into law to help address the maternal mortality crisis among women Veterans by improving care at VA facilities and shedding light on the scope of this crisis, particularly among women of color. Duckworth also worked with U. S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) to [secure](#) a provision in the American Rescue Plan that gives states a five-year option to extend healthcare coverage for new moms on Medicaid from 60 days after pregnancy to a full year. The provision was based off of legislation that Duckworth, Durbin and U.S. Representative Robin Kelly (D-IL-02) re-[introduced](#) last year that seeks to reduce America's rising maternal and infant mortality rate.

Additionally, Duckworth [introduced](#) the *Support Through Loss Act* last year to raise awareness about pregnancy loss and establish new paid leave benefits for workers experiencing painful challenges while seeking to grow their family. In March, Duckworth [introduced](#) a resolution recognizing the significance of endometriosis as an unmet chronic disease for women and designating March 2022 as National Endometriosis Awareness Month.