

Duckworth, Murray Introduce Bicameral Bill to Help Women with Disabilities Access Reproductive Healthcare

July 28 2023 8:20 AM



WASHINGTON, DC – Today, U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) joined Patty Murray (D-WA) in reintroducing the *Reproductive Healthcare Accessibility Act*,

legislation to help people with disabilities—who face discrimination and extra barriers when seeking care—receive better access to reproductive healthcare and the informed care they need to control their reproductive lives.

“For too long, Americans with disabilities have faced persistent barriers to healthcare services, equipment and providers,” said Duckworth. “With right-wing efforts underway to go even further to undermine these rights in the wake of the overturning of *Roe*, many are rightfully worried about having an even harder time accessing the reproductive care they need. Today, I’m proud to join Senator Murray and my colleagues in reintroducing the *Reproductive Healthcare Accessibility Act* to help ensure all of us in the disability community are not left behind in getting the care we need, when we need it.”

“People with disabilities have long faced discrimination and real roadblocks to getting the health care, including abortion care, that they need—and it’s become a full-blown crisis in the year after the *Dobbs* decision overturned the right to abortion, especially for the nearly 3 million disabled women who live in states without access to reproductive health care,” said Murray. “As we continue to fight back against Republicans’ escalating attacks on reproductive health care across the country, there’s so much more we need to do to ensure women and people with disabilities can access high-quality care from providers who understand their unique health care needs. My legislation with Senator Duckworth would make a big difference in helping people with disabilities access the high-quality reproductive care they deserve—and I’ll be fighting to pass it this Congress.”

A recent analysis from the National Partnership for Women & Families found that, one year after the *Dobbs* decision, more than 36 million women of reproductive age live in states that have or are likely to ban abortion—of these women, [2.9 million](#) are disabled. Women with disabilities are more likely to experience complications during pregnancy, are at [11 times](#) greater risk of maternal mortality and are also at [greater risk](#) for maternal morbidity. Pregnant women with disabilities often encounter healthcare practitioners who lack knowledge or comfort in managing their pregnancies, which also puts them at heightened risk for pregnancy-related health complications—and the lack of disabled medical professionals with diverse lived experiences, or providers who are trained on the unique needs of people with disabilities, contributes to this issue.

The Senators’ legislation would provide grant funding for training and education programs for healthcare professions focused on the reproductive health needs of people with disabilities, help to increase the representation of people with disabilities in the physician and nursing workforce as well as establish a new technical assistance center to provide recommendations and best practices regarding sexual and reproductive healthcare for people with disabilities, among other things. Duckworth and Murray first introduced the bill [last year](#).

The *Reproductive Healthcare Accessibility Act* would lower barriers to sexual and reproductive care and help ensure disabled people get timely access to competent healthcare. Specifically, the bill would:

- Provide grant funding to eligible entities to carry out training programs for healthcare professionals providing reproductive healthcare for individuals with disabilities (\$10 million);
- Expand the physician and nursing workforce by increasing the representation of people with disabilities in such workforces (\$15 million);
- Provide grant funding to carry out education programs focused on the sexual and reproductive healthcare needs of people with disabilities (\$10 million);
- Establish a new technical assistance center to provide recommendations and best practices regarding sexual and reproductive healthcare for people with disabilities (\$10 million); and
- Direct the Department of Health and Human Services to carry out a study to analyze reproductive healthcare for people with disabilities (\$15 million).

The legislation is endorsed by a wide range of groups, including Advocates for Youth, American Association of People with Disabilities, American Humanist Association, Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs, Autistic People of Color Fund, Autistic Self Advocacy Network, Autistic Women & Nonbinary Network, Care in Action, Caring Across Generations, Center for American Progress, Center for Economic and Policy Research, Center for Reproductive Rights and more. A full list of supporting groups is available [here](#).

Along with Duckworth and Murray, the legislation is cosponsored by U.S. Senators Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Cory Booker (D-NJ), John Fetterman (D-PA), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Martin Heinrich (D-NM), Mazie Hirono (D-HI), Ed Markey (D-MA), Alex Padilla (D-CA), Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Tina Smith (D-MN), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Peter Welch (D-VT), Sheldon Whitehouse, (D-RI) and Ron Wyden (D-OR).

U.S. Representatives Cori Bush (D-MO-01) and Ayanna Pressley (D-MA-07) are introducing companion legislation in the House.

A copy of the bill text is available [here](#).