

We are here today to voice support for Councilwoman Decker's policy order resolution to commemorate *Roe v Wade* and to protect comprehensive public funding for reproductive health services, including abortion. The policy order calls upon Congress to restore public funding for abortion, which would enable people living in poverty, Native Americans who depend on Indian Health Services, federal employees, those in prisons and detention centers, and those in the US military to have insurance that covers abortion.

We believe that every person has the right to make their own decisions about their health, and that all pregnant people should be able to choose what's best for themselves and their families. We furthermore believe that all pregnant people are entitled to insurance coverage that would enable them to obtain necessary care and give them the ability to make those choices, whether they are choosing to give birth or have an abortion. Abortion is not just what you may think it is--every pregnancy ended voluntarily, even those due to severe chromosomal abnormalities, or fetal demise, is considered an abortion. And yet, abortion is singled out and treated differently than any other medical procedure.

Since public funds, like Medicaid, cover costs related to pregnancy and childbirth, it just makes sense to cover abortion if someone decides that's what best. While federal Medicaid excludes abortion coverage, Massachusetts and many other states offer vital care by using state Medicaid funds to cover abortion, as well as childbirth, for people with low

incomes. We should not allow politicians to withhold coverage for someone who is in need and qualified for Medicaid just to make it impossible for that person to have an abortion.

As volunteers at the Eastern Massachusetts Abortion Fund, we know just how important that coverage is. Every week we get between 15-20 calls from people who need help paying for abortions, many of whom without our assistance would have to choose between paying their electricity bill or putting food on the table to come up with \$650 or more for an abortion. Those who are eligible for state Medicaid coverage don't have to make that difficult choice.

We also see the realities of federal limitations on public funding for abortion here, for our residents in MA. Just this year, we gave funds to a Boston woman who was a federal employee, already the mother of a four year old, who became pregnant and could not continue the pregnancy. She was shocked to find out that her health insurance, for which she paid every month, did not cover abortion. Her extended family relied on her for financial support, and she felt she could not ask them to pay the costs. And late last year, we received a call from a Massachusetts-based military spouse, who came from a conservative Kentucky family, who could not fathom adding another child to her household of four.

We are proud to stand here as Cambridge residents and have our voices join those in other cities across the country, in Philadelphia, New York, and

Cambridge City Council Testimony, Diane Roseman & Megan Smith

Travis County, TX that have passed similar resolutions. As advocates who hear stories every day, we understand the importance of restoring state- and-federally subsidized public insurance coverage. We urge our council people to pass this resolution, which would enable people on public insurance coverage to have the same opportunity as those of us with private insurance to plan their lives with safety, respect, and dignity. Thank you.

Diane Roseman and Megan Smith
Cambridge Residents and Volunteers at the Eastern Massachusetts
Abortion Fund