

Good evening Mayor Davis and Councilors. Thank you for taking time tonight to hear from Cambridge residents such as myself on Policy Order Resolution 13. I've come to speak in favor of this resolution, as it concerns the safety net and services needed to ensure that the rights guaranteed by the decision in *Roe v. Wade* are a reality for women in my community. The decision to end a pregnancy is one of the most difficult ones a woman makes; and yet politically motivated bans on abortion coverage obstruct a woman's ability to make the decision that's best for her and her family. Those are not the values I hold, and I am glad to see my city council - along with other city officials nationwide - formally recognize the importance of public insurance coverage in guaranteeing that a woman doesn't have this very personal decision taken away from her simply because she is poor.

I know this is an order to celebrate and reaffirm our commitment as a city to the holding in *Roe*, and that is an effort that I applaud. But I'd like to take a moment to reference a lesser known case, decided by the Court only several years later. In 1980, the Supreme Court heard *Harris v. McRae*, and, in a 5-4 decision, upheld the Hyde Amendment, which withholds federal funds from being used for abortion in Medicaid. In his dissent, Thurgood Marshall stated that "The Hyde Amendment [is] designed to deprive poor and minority women of the constitutional right to choose abortion." Low-income women and women of color are targets of bans on abortion coverage like the Hyde amendment and continue to bear the greatest burden of restrictions on funding for abortion today. In adopting Policy Order 13, the Council affirms that the amount of money a woman has or doesn't have should not prohibit her from having an abortion.

Cambridge City Council Testimony, Ravina Daphary

As a woman of color and a child of immigrant parents, this issue is particularly important to me because unfair bans on reproductive health coverage disproportionately impact my community. Women struggling to make ends meet shouldn't have inferior health care services than women with more money - and that includes abortion, however we may feel about it.

I feel fortunate to live in a state that provides coverage for abortion in its Medicaid program and in a city whose officials are meeting today to reaffirm the values that underlie that policy. Yet this is not the case for women enrolled in Medicaid nationwide – whether a woman is covered depends on where she lives and if her elected officials truly represent the needs and values of her and her family. I thank Councilor Decker for doing just that in bringing this important issue to the council, and I strongly urge its passage.

Ravina Daphary
Cambridge Resident