

Good evening Common Council members and members of the community, and thank you for this opportunity to speak. My name is Liz Weissbrot and I am the Vice President for Patient Services at Planned Parenthood of the Southern Finger Lakes. I have been working in the field of reproductive health care for over 20 years, and I have seen firsthand what a burden it can be for women who are struggling to make ends meet for their families to have to battle to obtain basic health care services in a safe and affordable way.

When politicians restrict health coverage for abortions, when they force women to cross state lines, take time away from her work and her education, and resources away from her family in order to obtain health care that should be based on personal decisions about what is best for her own circumstances, we all lose. Because we know that denying or restricting access to healthcare based on arbitrary and unequal insurance discrimination means that women will be forced to carry pregnancies that they do not desire and cannot adequately support. When politicians deny women the means to space pregnancies and to determine their life paths, society loses. Because we know that women want to be able to have the resources to care for their children, to complete their educations, to achieve economic self-sufficiency, and to give their children the best possible start in life. But none of that is possible without reproductive self-determination, the ability to make one's own choices about one's own body, and access to the health care that will support those choices.

So when a patient comes into one of our health centers and says "I have made a decision about the healthcare that I want to receive, I have made a decision about my own body and the safe and legal procedure that I want to receive", we should be able to accommodate her, based on nothing more than the fact that she has the appropriate information to make her own decision, and the right to abortion access that anyone and everyone in this country should have. And that right to access and that right to health care should not depend on her income, or the state in which she lives, or her chosen field of work, or her choice to serve her country as military personnel, or the type of safe and legal procedure that she is choosing, or the type of insurance that she has. Health care is a basic human right. And no matter what our individual feelings about abortion may be, politicians must not be allowed to deny any woman access to safe and legal health care services because she is poor or because of where she lives or because of how she is insured.

I am grateful to live and work in an incredibly sensible and supportive community, in a state that takes its responsibility to support its citizens' access to safe and affordable health care seriously. Let's show the rest of the country what we know to be right and true. Let's pass this resolution.

Thank you.