

My name is Zoe Maisel, I'm a junior at Cornell University, and a co-president of Generation Action, a Cornell club dedicated to reproductive rights and social justice on our campus and throughout the community.

I support the resolution in front of you today which calls for restoring and sustaining abortion coverage because every person should be able to make their own decisions about pregnancy, regardless of economic status.

As a college student and student organizer, I know that bans on abortion coverage, like the Hyde Amendment, disproportionately affect young people, people of color, and low-income people. And in a city where the students double the population during the academic year and where, according to census data, 55.66% of the full-time residents are between the ages of 15 and 24, access to the full range of reproductive health care services in Ithaca is critical. I know that there are students in Ithaca who wish they were here tonight; they have problem sets and essays and study groups. But we also know that student health has to be a priority; we cannot succeed without adequate coverage that includes abortion. I am here for myself, for my friends, and for all my peers.

While abortion is legal in the US, it doesn't mean everyone can get this care when they need it. When abortion is not covered, it becomes inaccessible for many. I'm grateful to attend school in New York State, a state where Medicaid covers abortion, but I know that people on Medicaid in 35 states and the District of Columbia don't have that right. How can we allow zip code to dictate care? How can we decide for someone else whether or not they should get an abortion?

In states across the country, politicians are passing bills that make accessing abortion more difficult; twenty-five states currently ban insurance coverage of abortion in plans offered through their state health exchange and 10 restrict abortion in every plan statewide. These bans have nothing to do with healthcare; they are entirely politically motivated.

Tonight, Ithaca has a chance to stand up for reproductive rights and endorse a future where everyone has access to the care they need. Reproductive freedom is an American value, an Ithacan value, and a student value.

Members of the Council, I call on you to pass this resolution.