



Passing a Resolution in Support of Insurance Coverage of Abortion: Why Durham County?

The Hyde Amendment, first passed by Congress in 1976, bans Medicaid coverage of abortion. Federal law also prohibits insurance coverage of abortion for women who qualify for other government-sponsored insurance programs, including women enrolled in Medicare, veterans and active members of the military, federal employees, Native American women, women in federal prison, and women who serve in the Peace Corps. As a result of the Hyde Amendment and similar restrictions, nearly 29 million women of reproductive age do not have insurance coverage for abortion.

In addition to the direct harm that women in Durham County face as a result of the Hyde Amendment and other bans on abortion coverage, it is vitally important at a time when reproductive rights are being rolled back across the country that the people of Durham County make explicit their belief that all women deserve equal access to reproductive health care. In passing a resolution calling for insurance coverage of abortion, Durham County would join a number of localities that have taken a stand for abortion access for all women, regardless of their income. The Boston City Council, the Cambridge, MA City Council, the Cook County, IL Board of Commissioners, the Ithaca Common Council, the Los Angeles City Council, the Madison, WI Common Council, the Multnomah County, OR Board of Commissioners, the New York City Council, the Philadelphia Board of Health and City Council, the Pittsburgh City Council, the Seattle City Council, and the Travis County, TX Commissioners Court have all passed resolutions in support of coverage for comprehensive reproductive health care. Durham County has the opportunity to join a growing chorus of voices declaring that all women deserve access to insurance coverage of abortion.

The Impact of Bans on Abortion Coverage in Durham County

Federal Policy

Many women in Durham County who qualify for coverage from the federal government are subject to bans on insurance coverage of abortion.

- 9,146 women of reproductive age receive Medicaid coverage
- 1,447 women of reproductive age receive Medicare coverage
- 102 women of reproductive age receive health insurance from TRICARE
- 175 women of reproductive age receive health insurance from the VA

Such restrictions also apply to Durham County residents who work for the federal government, as well as Peace Corps volunteers, federal prisoners, and Native American women who utilize Indian Health Services.

State Policy

North Carolina has some of the most extensive bans on insurance coverage of abortion in the country, including on state teacher and employee insurance plans, city and county employee insurance plans, and all plans offered through the state's insurance marketplace. This means that any woman of reproductive age in Durham County who is a teacher, an employee of the state, city, or county, or who purchases insurance on the state's marketplace is subject to ban on abortion coverage.

Both the state and federal government have typically been among the largest employers in North Carolina. With mandates to greater transparency around pay equity, benefits provision and non-discriminatory

hiring, as well as a commitment to rural areas, government jobs have traditionally provided better employment opportunities for rural women, women of color, and women from low-income communities. These can be good jobs that attract and retain many Durham women, and should not come with an exception in the benefits they provide; an exception that is not made in this way for any other medical procedure. Setting the precedent of insurance bans in public insurance inevitably leads to private insurance making the same exception, leaving many women who hadn't expected an unplanned pregnancy realizing at a vulnerable time how limited their options may be. As almost half of Americans struggle to come up with \$400 needed for any kind of emergency¹, it's reasonable to believe – at typically \$500 for a first trimester abortion, along with travel, child care and lost work-time costs – that many women across Durham would have the same struggle should they be in this situation.

Restoring federal Medicaid coverage of abortion care would be a start to ensuring that women are able to exercise their rights to access to health care they need. Making abortion coverage more straightforward, transparent, and accessible ensures that women are able to make the best decision for their circumstances.

Increasing Restrictions on Insurance Coverage of Abortion across the Country

In addition to the direct harm that women in Durham County face as a result of the Hyde Amendment and other bans on abortion coverage, it is vitally important to make explicit the city's stance that all women deserve equal access to reproductive health care at a time when these rights are being taken away in the state and across the country. Local officials in cities and counties across the country have taken action to strip municipal employees of abortion coverage and to reject local family planning funding, including in Wake County,¹ and twenty-five states currently have laws banning insurance coverage of abortion on either their health exchanges or statewide, many of which have been passed in the last several years.²

Durham County: A History of Social Justice

In April 2016, the Durham County Board of Commissioners unanimously condemned HB2, urging its immediate repeal, condemning the loss of local governments' authority to govern in the best interest of their citizens, and stating its opposition to discrimination of any form. In the resolution, the Board also committed to ensuring that all persons are treated with dignity and respect without regard to sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, race, religious affiliation, age, familial status, marital status and all protected categories.³ A resolution in support of insurance coverage of abortion for all people is squarely in line with these stated values, opposing these policies that have a disproportionate impact on low-income families, women of color, immigrants, and young people. Further, North Carolina's abortion coverage bans are so extensive they restrict the right of local government even to determine the parameters of their own insurance policies. A resolution in Durham County is aligned with its tradition of standing up for local control, progress, and social justice.

What's Next

For too long, politicians have interfered in women's health decisions by banning insurance coverage for abortion care. A hostile executive administration and the anti-abortion leadership in Congress have introduced legislation to make these devastating bans permanent. Even as we resist new attacks on abortion access and coverage, we will not stop fighting for the future our families need to thrive. We call on the Durham County Board of Commissioners to stand with cities and counties across the country in

¹ <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/05/my-secret-shame/476415/>

demanding that each of us should be able to make decisions about abortion with dignity and respect, and without political interference.

¹ <http://www.nirhealth.org/resources/tracking-trends/local-attempts-to-limit-abortion-coverage-and-womens-health-funding/>

² <https://www.guttmacher.org/state-policy/explore/restricting-insurance-coverage-abortion>

³ <http://dconc.gov/home/showdocument?id=17073>