

Governor Phil Murphy

Reproductive Freedom Act Aims to Protect and Expand Health Care Access in New Jersey

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Advocates from Across the State Call on Lawmakers to Pass Bill and Ensure Reproductive Health Care Access for All

TRENTON, NJ — As politicians in other states race to push reproductive health care out of reach, Governor Phil Murphy and legislative leaders, including Senate Majority Leader Loretta Weinberg and Assemblywoman Valerie Vainieri Huttle, are stepping up to protect reproductive freedom and remove barriers to access for all people who need care. During an announcement event today, the Governor announced that lawmakers will introduce the Reproductive Freedom Act, proactive legislation that will help protect and expand New Jerseyans' ability to receive reproductive health care, such as birth control, and pregnancy-related care, including abortion.

The Reproductive Freedom Act protects and expands access to essential reproductive health care services in three key ways:

- 1. The Reproductive Freedom Act explicitly ensures all New Jerseyans have the right to make their own personal health decisions when it comes to birth control and pregnancy-related care, including abortion.** The decision about whether and when to become a parent is one of the most important life decisions we make. We need to trust all people who can become pregnant to make decisions about their own health and lives.
- 2. The Reproductive Freedom Act makes certain that financial barriers do not prevent anyone from making their own personal health decisions when it comes to birth control and pregnancy-related care, including abortion.** Key provisions of the bill require private insurance coverage for birth control and abortion care with no out-of-pocket costs, to ensure that a person's income or insurance status do not dictate their ability to access time-sensitive health care.
- 3. The Reproductive Freedom Act expands access to birth control and pregnancy-related care including abortion by breaking down medically-unnecessary restrictions that right now only serve to block access to care.** It is time to secure a future that safeguards reproductive care, upholds basic rights and justice, and respects decision-making throughout pregnancy.

"As access to health care and the right to choose are under attack at the federal level, we will support, defend, and protect reproductive rights here in New Jersey," **said Governor Murphy**. "The Reproductive Freedom Act will remove barriers to reproductive health, as well as expand access to contraception while reaffirming choice. Together, we stand unwavering in our commitment to work

 Back
to top

towards reproductive freedom for all New Jerseyans.”

“Women have to stay vigilant in the fight to keep every single right we have earned - even the rights and protections that have been upheld for decades,” **said Lt. Governor Sheila Oliver, who serves as Commissioner of the Department of Community Affairs.** “A lot is at stake, but we are not new to this fight and we cannot stand by as our reproductive rights are chipped away - especially in our underserved communities. Today, I throw my full support behind the Reproductive Freedom Act because it will help protect and expand the laws that ensure everyone in our State has the ability to access preventative healthcare and make personal health care decisions.”

“This legislation delivers on the promise of equitable access to reproductive healthcare for all New Jersey residents,” **said Senate Majority Leader Loretta Weinberg.** “I am proud to stand with Asw. Vainieri-Huttle and the Thrive Coalition in the fight for this essential right.”

“New Jersey has always stood up for a woman's right to choose,” **said Assemblywoman Vainieri Huttle.** “Unfortunately, for too many New Jerseyans, those legal rights do not translate into access, especially for young people, communities of color, low income communities, the LGBTQIA community and undocumented individuals. At a time where the fundamental right to access reproductive health care is being challenged across the country, I am proud that New Jersey is taking bold action to safeguard these rights and expand access for all.”

“While other states are turning a blind eye and restricting access to reproductive rights, New Jersey is taking bold steps today to protect reproductive freedom and health equality for all women,” **said First Lady Tammy Murphy.** “As much as today is a declaration of our unyielding commitment to the women of our state, we also know it is another day in our ongoing fight to protect the progress we have made. And, no matter the obstacles, we will only move forward.”

“The current health crisis has reinforced just how important it is to make sure everyone can get the care they need, including reproductive health care, no matter what,” **said Kaitlyn Wojtowicz, Vice President of Public Affairs, Planned Parenthood Action Fund of New Jersey.** “The Reproductive Freedom Act will ensure that everyone – including people of color, people in low income communities, immigrants, the uninsured and other marginalized groups – can make their own personal medical decisions with dignity.”

“In this moment of profound urgency for our health and rights, the tireless dedication of independent abortion providers here in New Jersey models a path forward for us all,” **said Roxanne Sutocky, Patient Advocate and Director of Community Engagement, Cherry Hill Women’s Center.** “We have spent decades serving our communities, rising above seemingly insurmountable restrictions and barriers, and providing care, often to patients who have historically been and remain underserved – including people of color and those struggling financially. We’ve always known firsthand that a right is not a right when folks can’t reach care in their own communities. It’s past time for New Jersey to stand with providers, and protect and expand access to care.”

“At a pivotal moment for our country, New Jersey has the opportunity to stand firm in the values of freedom and equity, and to act on urgent calls to confront systemic racial injustices, by passing the Reproductive Freedom Act,” **said Sarah Fajardo, Policy Director of ACLU New Jersey.** “The Reproductive Freedom Act expands and protects access to reproductive health care for all New

Jerseyans regardless of income level, immigration status, or gender identity. We're proud to join Gov. Murphy, Sen. Weinberg, Asw. Huttie, and our fellow advocates in advancing this landmark legislation "

"New Jersey has a strong record of advancing reproductive health care policy, but programs that serve low-income people, especially women of color, have chronically been vulnerable to funding cuts – a policy choice that exasperates health care gaps and disparities and upholds the systemic oppression of historically marginalized groups," **said Brandon McKoy, President of New Jersey Policy Perspective.** "The Reproductive Freedom Act seeks to ensure that all people who can become pregnant, regardless of their circumstance, have control over their reproductive health decisions—and by extension their economic status—by removing unnecessary or outdated barriers to health care and providing adequate resources to advance racial equity."

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[First Lady Tammy Snyder Murphy \(/governor/admin/fl/\)](#)

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[Environment \(/governor/initiatives/#Environment\)](#)

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