



# City of Austin

January 7, 2014

To the Members of the United States Congress and the Texas State Legislature:

Today, we the undersigned call upon the Congress of the United States to pass the Women's Health Protection Act (WHPA), and upon the Texas legislature to repeal House Bill 2 (HB2). We believe that the WHPA is necessary to protect Austin residents and those who may come to Austin to receive health care. We urge Congress and the Legislature of the State of Texas to protect each woman's health, her right to determine whether and when to bear a child, and her ability to exercise that right.

As City Council Members, it is our duty to protect our constituents. Sometimes we find that legislation passed by the Texas legislature or the United States Congress, and to which our constituents are subject, is going to be particularly helpful or harmful to them. In these situations, we are compelled to provide our input and to call for action. As City Council Members, we interact daily with our constituents; we run into them in the grocery store and sit next to them in church. Because of our proximity, we know these restrictions will negatively impact our constituents.

Despite the clear constitutional rights established by *Roe v. Wade*, each year legislatures across the country pass restrictions to limit a woman's right to make the best health care decisions for herself and her family. Texas is no exception to this trend. When the Texas legislature passed HB2, we knew Austin residents could be harmed by it. We also knew that Austin would become one of the very few places left to get an abortion (and in some cases, *any* reproductive health care) in Texas, and that women's health and lives would be put at risk because of that.

Because women of reproductive age live in Austin and deserve equal access to comprehensive reproductive health care, we believe federal legislation limiting government interference with the delivery of the full range of reproductive health services is necessary to ensure that women in all states have equal access to these services. The WHPA would protect women's access to essential reproductive health care services. The legislation would create a new set of legal tools to invalidate a range of state restrictions intended to make it harder for women to access safe and legal abortion care.

Austin residents and those who may come to Austin should have access to safe, legal reproductive health care. We urge Congress and the Texas legislature to act to protect the health of our constituents by passing the WHPA and repealing HB2.

Sincerely,

Council Member Bill Spelman

Mayor Pro Tem Sheryl Cole

Council Member Laura Morrison