

Inslee and legislators roll out more reproductive freedom bills for 2023 legislative session

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Today, Gov. Jay Inslee and lawmakers announced several policy proposals that will be part of a 2023 legislative package to strengthen access and protection for patients seeking abortion and other reproductive health services. They were joined by more than a dozen faith leaders and representatives of reproductive care providers.

"Access to a woman's right of choice is a health care issue," said Inslee. "Health care must remain the providence of individual Washington women. These laws will keep the tentacles of restrictive states out of Washington."

Rep. Drew Hansen previewed a sanctuary policy that will help protect patients from states like Texas or Idaho from being punished for lawfully seeking and receiving legal health care services in Washington state.

"If other states are going to be creative and aggressive in making anti-choice laws, we will be creative and aggressive in fighting back," said Hansen. "We are going to use every tool at our disposal to protect reproductive rights in our state."

Rep. Tarra Simmons discussed a bill first introduced last session that would prevent erosion of choice due to health care consolidations. Large, private health care organizations have quickly acquired competitors, leading to long waits, fewer choices, and new restrictions for gender-affirming care and reproductive health care.

The bill will require oversight for health system consolidation to ensure that care remains affordable, accessible, and held to a high standard of quality. The bill will also combat extralegal restrictions imposed by health systems blocking patients from lawful abortion or gender-affirming care.

"Rapid health system consolidation affects quality of care - professionals cannot provide care to the fullest of their ability, or to the standard that patients deserve," said Simmons.

The event was held at the Wayside United Church of Christ in Federal Way. Amy Johnson, a minister at the church, assured Washingtonians that she and many other faith leaders embrace people considering abortions, LTBTQ+ people, and people seeking gender-affirming care.

"I have worked for five decades in support of human rights and justice," said Johnson. "We affirm all genders and open our doors to LGBTQ+ people as children of God, created in God's image."



Gov. Jay Inslee, state lawmakers, faith leaders, and reproductive care providers convened Friday in Federal Way at Wayside United Church of Christ to announce additional measures to protect reproductive freedom and the right of choice.

The event followed a press conference last week in Bellingham where Inslee affirmed he will be requesting legislation to pursue a constitutional amendment that expressly establishes a fundamental right to an abortion and a fundamental right to choose or refuse contraceptives.

At that event, Sen. Manka Dhingra and Rep. Vandana Slatter announced a health data bill that will close an egregious legal loophole that allows non-health care organizations to collect, share or sell private health information. The bill also prohibits collecting data on specific locations related to reproductive and gender-affirming care. Attorney General Bob Ferguson is requesting the legislation.

In the months since the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*, 13 states have enacted bans on all or nearly all abortions. Nearly half of states are expected to similarly limit abortion care services.

Immediately following the Dobbs decision in June, Inslee joined the governors from California and Oregon to launch a multi-state commitment to reproductive freedom. Inslee and legislators then announced their intent to pursue a range of policies to strengthen access and support for abortion providers and patients. At that press conference Inslee announced he was making \$1 million in emergency funds available for reproductive care clinics, and he issued a directive to the Washington State Patrol to refuse to cooperate with investigatory requests related to abortion that come from agencies in states with severe abortion limits.



Gov. Jay Inslee has held several events to announce a pro-choice 2023 legislative package including bills to protect data privacy, prevent out-of-state adverse legal action, and to limit the erosion of choice due to health system mergers. The governor fully supports a state constitutional amendment to permanently codify the right of choice.

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