

## **2023 RESOLUTION: Abortion Health Care is a Public Health Priority**

**WHEREAS**, the Wisconsin Medical Society<sup>1</sup>, American Public Health Association<sup>2,3,4</sup>, American College of Obstetricians & Gynecologists<sup>5</sup>, American Academy of Pediatrics<sup>6</sup>, American Nurses Association<sup>7,8</sup>, and American Psychological Association<sup>9</sup>, have issued statements in support of access to safe and legal abortion health care; and

**WHEREAS**, pregnancy-related morbidity and mortality rates in the United States are among the highest of all developed countries<sup>10</sup>, continue to rise year after year<sup>11</sup>, and disproportionately impact people and communities of color<sup>12</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, approximately half of all pregnancies in the United States are unintended<sup>13</sup> with morbidity and mortality higher among individuals with unwanted pregnancies who seek and are denied abortion health care compared to those who seek and receive abortion health care<sup>14</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, in addition to higher morbidity and mortality rates, individuals with unwanted pregnancies who seek and are denied abortion health care also face worse long-term social, educational, and economic outcomes compared to those who seek and receive abortion health care, including increased likelihood of staying in abusive relationships, decreased likelihood to achieve aspirational life goals, decreased likelihood of completing postsecondary education, and increased likelihood of experiencing persistent adverse economic consequences<sup>15</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, legal abortion health care in the United States is safe with the health risks associated with childbirth estimated to be fourteen times greater than with abortion<sup>16</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, abortion health care in the United States is common with nearly one in four women\* terminating a pregnancy by age 45<sup>17</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, equitable access to safe and legal abortion is an essential component of health care for pregnant individuals<sup>3,4,5,14,16</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, abortion health care, like all health care, should be driven by evidence-based standards developed and supported by medical professionals<sup>4,5</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, pregnant individuals may need access to abortion health care for different reasons, some of which include, but are not limited to, contraceptive failure, barriers to contraceptive use and access, life threatening conditions that occur during pregnancy, fetal anomalies, rape, incest, intimate partner violence, lack of social and economic resources to support a healthy pregnancy or parent successfully, and many other individual and systemic reasons<sup>5,18</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, terminating a pregnancy, continuing a pregnancy, parenting, or placing a child for adoption are deeply personal, potentially life-changing decisions that a pregnant person is best positioned to make for themselves in consultation with a licensed health care provider<sup>18</sup> as well as other important people in their lives, if and as they so choose (such as, a partner, family member, friend, faith leader, counselor, or doula); and

**WHEREAS**, abortion has become mostly inaccessible in Wisconsin since June 24, 2022, when the U.S. Supreme Court decided in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Care Organization*<sup>19</sup> to overturn nearly 50 years of abortion access protections under *Roe v. Wade*<sup>20</sup>, and Wisconsin reverted to an 1849 law (Statute § 940.04)<sup>21</sup> which has eliminated access to safe and legal abortion in the state in most circumstances<sup>22</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, unsafe abortion is a leading cause of pregnancy-related morbidity and mortality globally, especially among countries where abortion is illegal<sup>23</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, the World Health Organization has identified lack of access to safe, timely, affordable, and respectful abortion health care as a critical public health and human rights issue<sup>23</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, among Wisconsinites, 68% think that abortion should be legal in all or most cases<sup>26</sup>, 61% oppose the U.S. Supreme Court decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade*<sup>27</sup>, and 72% say the state should repeal the 1849 law criminalizing abortion<sup>28</sup>.

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED That The Wisconsin Public Health Association:**

- Advocates for policies across all levels of government to ensure equitable access to abortion health care for pregnant people in Wisconsin, including the repeal of Wisconsin Statute §940.04, which criminalizes abortion.
- Advocates for additional actions beyond the repeal of Wisconsin Statute §940.04 in order to support equitable access to abortion health care for Wisconsin residents by removing barriers, such as repealing medically-unnecessary Targeted Regulation of Abortion Providers (TRAP) laws<sup>27,28</sup>; mandating health insurance coverage, including Medicaid coverage, for abortion health care; and ensuring paid medical leave that covers all pregnancy-related health care needs, including abortion health care.
- Supports coalition building and cross-movement work to advocate for equitable access to abortion health care.
- Opposes legislation and administrative policy at the state and federal level that further limits equitable access to abortion health care in Wisconsin and nationally.

## References

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