

Joan Adler Testimony

I have been a pregnancy options counselor at Planned Parenthood for close to 25 years. I cannot emphasize how grateful I am to live in a state that has chosen to protest federal law by including abortion coverage in health plans for Medicaid recipients. We at Planned Parenthood are also so thankful to reside in Tompkins County where pregnant, eligible women can be quickly screened, enrolled in Medicaid, and receive time-sensitive care without long waits or complicated paperwork. This is seamless, inter-agency cooperation that supports women's health. It is an exemplary service model for the rest of the state and for our country.

The resolution we are asking you to support calls for the passage of the EACH Woman Act, which would restore insurance coverage of abortion for your friends, neighbors, or relatives who have jobs with insurance through the federal government or receive insurance through federal programs. It would also remove a different but complementary barrier for our patients: ending politically driven control of private insurance.

The decision to end a pregnancy is highly personal and can to varying degrees be an anxious time. At the very minimum, each woman must prepare for a medical event, a prospect that is inevitably stressful. Yet, too often, a compounding stressor is the fear of "how will I pay for this?" I am here to testify to the profound relief expressed by so many of our patients once they learn NY Medicaid covers abortion care. This supports the financial health and independence of individuals and families. Again, it is a compassionate and rational standard for the rest of the country.

I'm not sure even we at Planned Parenthood would understand the human toll exacted when Medicaid does not cover abortion or when the private health insurance marketplace is mandated to not cover abortion care were we not located adjacent to a very poor swath of Pennsylvania, a state that does both. We've seen a 16 year old with uncontrollable seizures, a single mom of three whose life was imperiled during her last pregnancy by hypertension, and a woman who had been in the ER three times as a result of an abusive partner who on two occasions broke her order of protection. All of these women had out-of-state Medicaid and all were denied coverage. These are our patients, they struggle to find transportation and child care to travel hours for our services, their financial resources are thin, and their decision to end a pregnancy is entwined with their ability and responsibility to sustain themselves and their families. Paying for their abortions requires tremendous sacrifice.

Please join us in what Ithaca and New York do best: the right thing. Pass this resolution.