

Testimony from Emily Zahn, Southern California Field Director
Planned Parenthood Affiliates of California
September 30, 2016

Thank you for hearing my comments today.

My name is Emily Zahn, I work at the Planned Parenthood Affiliates of California and today I am here to testify on behalf of the Los Angeles Coalition for Reproductive Justice, a coalition of over 20 social justice organizations collaborating to enhance reproductive health, rights, and justice in Los Angeles.

As a newcomer to L.A., a Planned Parenthood employee, and a woman I know how lucky we are to live in a state like California where Medi-Cal coverage of abortion means that approximately 439,000 women of reproductive age in Los Angeles are able to use their insurance for this important medical procedure. I also know that abortion coverage bans like the Hyde Amendment disproportionately impact communities who already face barriers to quality health care including low-income people, women of color, young people, immigrants, and transgender or gender non-conforming people. On this day in 1976, Rep. Henry Hyde first introduced the Hyde Amendment to ban Medicaid coverage of abortion. Every year since, Congress has included the Hyde Amendment in federal appropriations legislation, thereby restricting Medicaid coverage for abortion care. Not only that, but the pain and punishment of the Hyde Amendment has been extended far beyond people who use Medicaid, which means that even here in L.A., despite Medi-Cal coverage for abortion, there are over 11,000 women of reproductive age who are insured through the federal government whose insurance does not cover abortion. That includes veterans and armed service members on TRICARE, Peace Corps volunteers, people on Medicare, Native Americans who use Indian Health Services, and federal government employees.

The resolution in front of you today calls for the adoption of the EACH Woman Act. The EACH Woman Act would ensure that everyone who receives care or insurance through the federal government would have abortion coverage. It also prohibits politicians from interfering with the private insurance market to prevent insurance companies from providing abortion coverage. The two measures of the EACH Woman Act would lift the bans on abortion coverage and ensure that all women have equal ability to make personal life decisions regardless of how much she earns, how she is insured, or where she lives.

The Los Angeles City Council has a long history of taking action to support important social justice issues and challenges facing this country. We know that what we do here in Los Angeles will resonate across the country, and that just because we are lucky enough to live here, we can't forget about the women all across this country who need our support. Today, the Los Angeles City Council has an opportunity to once again live our values and continue to be a progressive leader by becoming the eleventh place in the country to pass such a resolution, joining localities including Travis County, TX, Seattle, Chicago's Cook County, and New York City. Members of the City Council, today on the 40th anniversary of the Hyde Amendment, I urge you continue our city's long-standing tradition of standing up for dignity and justice by passing this resolution to Be Bold and End Hyde.

Thank you for your time.