Communities Fight Back Against Extreme Abortion Bans
Local Policy Recommendations for Responding to TX SB 8

On September 1, 2021, an extreme new abortion ban went into effect in Texas, making abortion significantly more difficult to access for millions of Texans. This law bans abortion after six weeks of pregnancy and allows anyone—including anti-abortion vigilantes—to enforce the ban by suing abortion providers and anyone who helps a person obtain an abortion after six weeks of pregnancy. While this ban is the first of its kind, Texas is not an outlier. SB 8 is part of a larger strategy of anti-abortion advocates and politicians to chip away at abortion access state by state, with the ultimate goal of banning abortion outright. Politicians in states like Florida have already indicated their intent to file bills similar to SB 8. And the pending Supreme Court Case, *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, to be argued on December 1, directly challenges *Roe v. Wade*. If the Supreme Court overturns *Roe*, 24 states could immediately ban abortion outright.

Local leaders dedicated to reproductive rights and justice have the responsibility and opportunity to counteract these harmful laws by acting to expand abortion access and fight back against abortion stigma. All* Above All and the National Institute for Reproductive Health developed these municipal policy recommendations with input from the Trust Respect Access Coalition of Texas. The following are recommendations that will help all people, including Texans, access the abortion care they need without shame, unnecessary restrictions, or outside interference.

- **Allocate municipal funding to abortion.** Abortion funds have been working on the ground for decades to help people access abortion care, and they are in urgent need of funding. Allocating municipal funding to these organizations can help people in your community, and those who must leave Texas or other restrictive states for abortion care, navigate a range of barriers, such as paying for care out-of-pocket, taking time off work, arranging for childcare, and finding transportation. See our resource, "Best Practices in Municipal Abortion Funding," to learn more. Localities should also explore options to fund or cover abortion care through any existing health benefits or programs they provide.

- **Amplify calls to support abortion funds.** Local leaders can use their platforms to ensure that people know about and access the infrastructure that already exists to help people access abortion care. Provide information on relevant government websites about abortion funds and encourage community members to donate to these organizations via ActBlue, which supports 10 key organizations in Texas.

- **Consider corporate accountability measures.** Corporations like AT&T are some of the biggest donors to anti-abortion politicians who wrote and passed SB 8. Localities can review their existing contracts to determine if they are in business with any of these organizations, and consider ending the contracts early if legal, choosing not to renew these contracts when they expire, and/or speaking out against their actions both publicly and by contacting them directly. Officials can also choose not to enter into new contracts with these companies and proactively call on corporations in their communities to voice support for abortion access.

There are some common responses to laws like SB 8 that advocates encourage you to avoid.

- **Do not boycott Texas.** Travel bans and boycotts of goods made in Texas are likely to most directly harm the same people most harmed by SB 8: people of color, immigrants, young people, people working to make ends meet, and people living in rural areas—many of whom are under-represented by the legislature that passed the law. Instead, show your commitment to economic and reproductive justice by allocating municipal funding to your local abortion fund.

- **Do not start a new abortion fund without mapping existing resources first.** Many people have been moved to action in response to the passage of SB 8; in some cases, this includes a desire to start a new organization to help people pay for abortions or practical support for abortion care. This is an admirable instinct, but it is important for people to first map out the resources that already exist in places like Texas, and their own communities, so as not to duplicate or undermine existing efforts. Contact local advocates, the National Network of Abortion Funds, or NIRH and All* Above All before acting to learn about what resources may already exist in your community.

- **Avoid actions that are merely symbolic.** Texans and people suffering under egregious abortion restrictions across the country need bold action from leaders at every level of government. Passing policies that make an impact and allocating funding that demonstrates your values are the most impactful ways to show your support for abortion access. If a resolution is the only possibility for your community, consider passing a proclamation recognizing Abortion Provider Appreciation Day on March 10 and organizing an action to celebrate your local abortion providers, after verifying that they are comfortable with your idea and it won't put them in danger. If you do pass a symbolic resolution, ensure you do so boldly - say the word "abortion," encourage testimony from supporters, distribute a press release about the resolution and why you sponsored it, and amplify the resolution on all channels you use to communicate with your constituents.

Contact Jenny Dodson Mistry at jmistry@nirhealth.org and Kelsey Woida at woida@allaboveall.org to learn more about these policy recommendations, access guidance on messaging to talk about abortion and avoid perpetuating abortion stigma, and get more information on how NIRH and All* Above All can support you in your work.

For more local policy recommendations to protect reproductive health, rights, and justice, review the Local Reproductive Freedom Index from the National Institute for Reproductive Health.