

# FREEDOM FROM RELIGION *foundation*

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## SENT VIA EMAIL

The Honorable Richard Blumenthal  
706 Hart Senate Office Bldg  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ted Cruz  
127A Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Support for the Women's Health Protection Act of 2021 is essential

Dear Chairman Blumenthal and Ranking Member Cruz:

We are writing on behalf of the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) to express our full support for the Women's Health Protection Act of 2021 (S.1975), federal legislation that will protect the right to access abortion care throughout the United State. FFRF is a national nonprofit organization with more than 35,000 members across the country. FFRF protects the constitutional separation between state and church and educates about nontheism.

### **We urge the Senate Judiciary Committee to send the Women's Health Protection Act (WHPA) to the floor for a vote.**

The WHPA protects abortion rights by nullifying state abortion bans. It would guarantee the right of patients to seek abortion care and of health care professionals to provide such care. Additionally, it would protect against medically unnecessary restrictions, such as mandatory ultrasounds, waiting periods, admitting privilege requirements and limitations on medication abortion. Such restrictions create burdensome barriers to abortion access and are not based in science.

Abortion is an extremely safe and effective medical procedure. A 2018 study by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) found that serious complications are rare.<sup>1</sup> For example, in 2017, medication abortions

accounted for 39 percent of all abortions in the United States<sup>2</sup> with a success rate of 95–98 percent.<sup>3</sup> <sup>4</sup> In fact, risk of major complications related to medication abortions is minimal — less than 1 percent.<sup>5</sup> In terms of safety, countless studies have shown women are about 14 times more likely to die during or after giving birth than from complications of an abortion.<sup>6</sup> The same study by NASEM that found abortions to be safe and effective also concluded that state regulations create barriers to optimal care.<sup>7</sup> By upholding medical standards, the WHPA would safeguard against unnecessary state regulations that block women from exercising their constitutional right to privacy over reproductive health care.

Furthermore, many of the current abortion restrictions are state-ordered mandates known as TRAP laws (Targeted Restrictions on Abortion Providers). The Freedom From Religion Foundation opposes TRAP laws because of their unscientific, religiously motivated roots that endanger women seeking abortions by failing to provide timely and comprehensive care. The WHPA would affirm that safe, legal abortion services are essential to women’s health and would enable health care professionals to provide abortion health care without restrictions that are more burdensome than those imposed on medically comparable procedures.

Religiously-motivated attacks on abortion rights have ramped up in recent years. Since 2019, 13 states have passed unconstitutional bans on abortion, including a total ban in Alabama and six-week bans in five states.<sup>8</sup> The year 2021 is on pace to set a record with 28 anti-abortion bills signed into law in just one week.<sup>9</sup> The Guttmacher Institute has recorded more more than 550 abortion restrictions introduced in 47 states. More than 80 restrictions have been enacted in 16 states so far this year. The WHPA will protect abortion access in every state, which has never been more essential given the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision to soon decide on Mississippi’s 15-week abortion ban, and with at least 23 abortion-related appeals pending in federal appeals courts.<sup>10</sup>

Fifty-nine percent percent of all Americans believe that abortion should be legal in all or most cases, including 82 percent of religiously unaffiliated Americans, 44 percent of white mainline Protestants and 55 percent of Catholics. However, 77 percent of white evangelicals believe that abortion should be illegal in all or most cases.<sup>11</sup> Evangelicals, at about a quarter of the population,<sup>12</sup> are seeking to force their minority anti-abortion position on the majority via legislation, counter to public opinion and science.

By contrast, non-religious Americans are the fastest growing segment of the U.S. population by religious identification — 35 percent of Americans are non-Christians, and this includes more than one in four Americans who now identify as religiously unaffiliated.<sup>13</sup> A recent survey found that 21 percent of Americans born after 1999 are atheist or agnostic.<sup>14</sup> We must honor the constitutional separation of state and church by ensuring that a minority cannot force its dogma on all other citizens, or impair health care based on personal religious objections.

In a secular nation, our laws related to health care, including abortion, must reflect science and promote the general welfare, including that of female citizens, as the Preamble to the U.S. Constitution requires. The general welfare is being endangered by anti-abortion zealotry at the state level. The WHPA would codify the vitally-needed right of health care providers to provide, and their patients to receive abortion care without medically unnecessary restrictions, limitations and bans.

**FFRF commends the Senate Judiciary Committee's Constitution Subcommittee for holding a hearing on this crucial legislation. We urge the Judiciary Committee to send the WHPA to the Senate floor for a vote.**

Very truly,



Annie Laurie Gaylor & Dan Barker

Co-presidents

ALG/DB:ba

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