

STATE OF NEW YORK

361

2023-2024 Regular Sessions

IN ASSEMBLY

January 6, 2023

Introduced by M. of A. GONZALEZ-ROJAS, ANDERSON, AUBRY, BICHOTTE HERMELYN, BRONSON, BURDICK, BURGOS, CARROLL, CLARK, CRUZ, CUNNINGHAM, DAVILA, DE LOS SANTOS, DINOWITZ, EPSTEIN, FORREST, GALLAGHER, GIBBS, GLICK, HEVESI, JACOBSON, JEAN-PIERRE, KELLES, KIM, LAVINE, LUNSFORD, MAMDANI, MITAYNES, OTIS, PAULIN, RAJKUMAR, REYES, RIVERA, L. ROSENTHAL, ROZIC, SEAWRIGHT, SEPTIMO, SIMON, TAPIA, THIELE, WALKER, WEPRIN, ZINERMAN -- read once and referred to the Committee on Health

AN ACT to amend the public health law, in relation to enacting the reproductive freedom and equity program

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

- 1 Section 1. Short title. This act shall be known and may be cited as
2 the "reproductive freedom and equity program".
3 § 2. Legislative findings. The legislature finds:
4 1. Abortion is essential health care and integral to the overall
5 health and wellbeing of individuals.
6 2. In 1970, New York legalized abortion, three years prior to the
7 Supreme Court decision in Roe v. Wade, which enumerated a constitutional
8 right to abortion care.
9 3. On January 22, 2019, the 36th anniversary of the Supreme Court
10 Decision Roe v. Wade, New York modernized our state law to be consistent
11 with the holdings of Roe v. Wade, articulating in that every individual
12 has a fundamental right to abortion.
13 4. Despite a constitutional and state right to abortion care, barriers
14 exist that challenge an individual's ability to exercise their right to
15 care.
16 5. Individuals seeking abortion care can often experience obstacles to
17 obtaining an abortion, whether that is an inability to afford the cost
18 of care, the distance one must travel, the costs associated with travel
19 including transportation needs, childcare, lodging, lost wages and more.

EXPLANATION--Matter in italics (underscored) is new; matter in brackets [-] is old law to be omitted.

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1 6. Barriers to care are often intensified for immigrants, young
2 people, people with disabilities and those living in rural areas.

3 7. If the United States Supreme Court overturns Roe v. Wade, access to
4 care across the country will dramatically shift with people in at least
5 26 states - 36,000,000 women and individuals with the capacity to become
6 pregnant - losing access to care.

7 8. It is estimated that in the wake of state bans on abortion across
8 the country, New York would be the nearest provider of care for 190,000
9 to 280,000 more women of reproductive age.

10 9. Abortion funds, abortion providers, and other community-based
11 organizations have provided essential support to individuals facing
12 practical support needs. These entities assist individuals seeking
13 abortion care including those living in New York, those traveling to New
14 York and those who must travel outside of New York for care.

15 10. With no direct state investment, safety-net abortion providers and
16 abortion funds predominately rely on philanthropic giving to address
17 unmet needs of abortion patients, challenging their ability to meet
18 present need, or any future increase demand for care.

19 11. New York has a proud legacy of protecting and expanding access to
20 comprehensive reproductive and sexual health care services, including
21 abortion.

22 12. In furtherance of that legacy, it is incumbent upon the state to
23 adopt bold and innovative programs and policies that protect and advance
24 reproductive freedom.

25 § 3. Article 25-A of the public health law is amended by adding a new
26 section 2599-bb-1 to read as follows:

27 § 2599-bb-1. Reproductive freedom and equity program. 1. As used in
28 this section, the following terms shall have the following meanings:

29 (a) "Abortion" shall mean the termination of pregnancy pursuant to
30 section twenty-five hundred ninety-nine-bb of this article.

31 (b) "Medical services" shall mean the range of care related to the
32 provision of abortion.

33 (c) "Practical support" shall mean direct assistance to enable a
34 person to obtain abortion care, including but not limited to ground and
35 air transportation, gas money, lodging, meals, childcare, translation
36 services, and doula support.

37 (d) "Program" shall mean the reproductive freedom and equity program.

38 2. There is hereby established in the department a reproductive free-
39 dom and equity program to ensure access to abortion care in the state.
40 Such program shall provide funding to abortion providers and non-profit
41 organizations whose primary function is to facilitate access to abortion
42 care. The program is designed to provide support to abortion providers
43 to increase access to care, fund uncompensated care, and to address the
44 support needs of individuals accessing abortion care.

45 3. The commissioner is authorized to distribute funds made available
46 for expenditure pursuant to this section. In determining funding for
47 applicants under the program, the commissioner shall consider the
48 following criteria and goals:

49 (a) Increase access to care by growing the capacity of abortion
50 providers to meet present and future care needs. Funds shall be awarded
51 to support the recruitment and retention of staff, patient navigators,
52 staff training, the establishment of new or renovation of existing
53 health centers, investments in technology to facilitate care, security
54 enhancements, and other operational needs that reflect the intention of
55 increasing access to abortion care.

1 (b) Fund uncompensated care, to ensure the affordability of and access
2 to care for anyone who seeks care in the state, regardless of their
3 ability to pay for care. Funds shall be awarded to abortion providers
4 and non-profit entities to support uncompensated costs of the medical
5 services associated with abortion care for individuals who lack insur-
6 ance coverage, are underinsured, or whose insurance is deemed unusable
7 by the rendering provider.

8 (c) Address practical support needs of individuals accessing abortion
9 care. Funds shall be awarded to non-profit entities providing practical
10 support to individuals within and traveling to the state.

11 4. In establishing and operating the program, the department shall
12 consult a range of experts including but not limited to individuals and
13 entities providing abortion care, abortion funds and other organizations
14 whose mission is to expand access to abortion care, to ensure the
15 program structure and expenditures are reflective of the needs of
16 abortion providers, abortion funds and consumers. The department shall
17 promulgate regulations necessary for implementation of the program.

18 5. The department shall not request, promulgate regulations to, or
19 otherwise require, any abortion provider or non-profit organization
20 receiving monies from the program to divulge the name, address, photo-
21 graph, license number, email address, phone number, or any other
22 personally identifying information of any patient, or individual who
23 sought or received practical support from such provider or organization,
24 in conjunction with the funding provided pursuant to this section.

25 6. Any non-profit organization or provider receiving funds from the
26 program shall take all necessary steps to ensure the confidentiality of
27 the individuals receiving services pursuant to state and federal laws.

28 § 4. Funding used to support the program shall be pursuant to funds
29 appropriated by the legislature and pursuant to subsequent chapters of
30 law. Such funding shall also be used to support the cost of administer-
31 ing the program and for any other purpose authorized by this act. The
32 level of expenditure by the department for the administrative support of
33 the program created pursuant to this act shall be subject to review and
34 approval annually through the state budget process.

35 § 5. Severability clause. If any provision of this act, or any appli-
36 cation of any provision of this act, is held to be invalid, or to
37 violate or be inconsistent with any federal law or regulation, that
38 shall not affect the validity or effectiveness of any other provision of
39 this act, or of any other application of any provision of this act,
40 which can be given effect without that provision or application; and to
41 that end, the provisions and applications of this act are severable.

42 § 6. This act shall take effect on the sixtieth day after it shall
43 have become a law. Effective immediately, the addition, amendment and/or
44 repeal of any rule or regulation necessary for the implementation of
45 this act on its effective date are authorized to be made and completed
46 on or before such effective date.