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

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

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

(c) "Program" shall mean the reproductive freedom and equity grant program established pursuant to subdivision two of this section.

2. There is hereby established in the department a reproductive freedom and equity grant program to ensure access to abortion care in the state. The program shall provide funding to abortion providers and non-profit organizations that provide or facilitate access to abortion care. The program shall be designed to provide support to abortion providers and non-profit organizations to increase access to care, fund uncompensated care, and to address the support needs of individuals accessing abortion care. Funding used to support the program shall be subject to appropriation.

3. The commissioner shall distribute funds made available for expenditure under this section. In determining funding for applicants under the grant program, the commissioner shall consider the following criteria and goals:

(a) Increase access to care by growing the capacity of abortion providers to meet present and future care needs. Funds may be awarded to support the recruitment, hiring, and retention of clinical and medical staff, costs of increasing the number of hours, days, and/or alternate times for currently employed clinical staff to provide increased access, care management and navigation, staff training, outreach and marketing costs, and other operational needs that increase access to abortion care.

(b) Fund uncompensated health care services associated with abortion care, to ensure the affordability of and access to care for individuals who lack ability to pay for care, for individuals who lack insurance coverage, are underinsured, or whose insurance is deemed unusable by the rendering provider.

4. In establishing and operating the program, the commissioner may consult a range of experts including but not limited to individuals and entities providing abortion care, abortion funds and other organizations whose mission is to expand access to abortion care, to ensure the program structure and expenditures reflect the needs of abortion providers, abortion funds and consumers. The commissioner may make regulations necessary for implementing the program.

5. The department and any non-profit organization or abortion provider receiving funds from the program shall take all necessary steps to ensure the confidentiality of the individuals receiving services pursuant to state and federal laws. The commissioner may request aggregate, de-identified information about how funding allocated pursuant to the program is spent, provided that no information which, alone or in combination, would permit a patient, provider, or an individual who sought, received, provided, or supported health care services under the program to be identified may be requested or shared.