



Congresswoman Marcia L. Fudge

Event: Women's Health Protection Act Press Conference

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Let me thank my colleagues Representatives Chu and Frankel, along with Senators Blumenthal, Baldwin and Boxer, for their leadership on protecting and reinforcing a woman's ability to make personal decisions regarding her reproductive rights. I also want to thank the Center for Reproductive Rights, NARAL Pro-Choice America, Planned Parenthood Federation of America and the ACLU for their strong support of the Women's Health Protection Act.

The right to privacy, which was the basis for *Roe v. Wade* and is rooted in the 14th Amendment, establishes a constitutional right for women to make decisions about their reproductive health. Yet, many state politicians have chosen to insert themselves into complicated and private medical decisions that should be left up to women and families to make by enacting restrictive laws designed to limit what is a constitutional right.

That's why I am proud to co-introduce the Women's Health Protection Act of 2013, which would protect a woman's constitutional right to access safe and legal abortion services regardless of where she lives. It would make it unlawful for states to pass restrictive legislation that endangers women's health and safety, and interferes with their personal medical decisions. For example, states would no longer be able to enact laws requiring doctors to inquire as to why a woman wants an abortion, or require women to visit a "crisis pregnancy center" prior to obtaining an abortion.

Earlier this year, my home state of Ohio passed a budget bill that defunds Planned Parenthood and restricts grants to rape crisis centers that referred women to abortion clinics. This budget bill also requires abortion clinics to transfer patients to a *local* hospital in the case of emergencies, but prohibits *public, local* hospitals from entering into those agreements. Together, these actions have severely limited a woman's ability to exercise her reproductive rights in the state of Ohio.

Just this year alone, four abortion clinics around the state have closed, including the latest one, Cleveland Center for Women's Health, which closed on September 30th. The state of Ohio now only has 11 clinics in nine cities that offer abortion services. Restrictive laws like the one

passed in Ohio make it extremely difficult, and sometimes nearly impossible, for a woman to obtain essential reproductive health care services.

Ohio's efforts to limit and dismantle women's reproductive rights are not an isolated occurrence. In fact, there has been an all-out legislative assault on women's rights during the last two years. Since 2011, state legislatures across the country have passed over 150 laws restricting abortion access.

Even though the landmark case of *Roe v. Wade* made it clear that women have a constitutional right to make decisions about their health, many states have constantly tried to roll back these protections through harmful legislation designed to impede a woman's ability to make what should be personal choices.

The Women's Health Protection Act would put a stop to this awful trend. The 14th Amendment must be respected; *Roe v. Wade* must be respected; women's reproductive rights must be respected.