

Oppose HB 591 - Prevent the Government from Controlling Granite Staters' Private Healthcare Decisions

Bill Summary: HB 591 would prohibit abortion after any embryonic cardiac activity is detected, which is usually at six weeks. Exemptions include medical procedures intended to prevent death or serious risk of substantial and irreversible impairment of a major bodily function. For performing an abortion outside of the exemption guidelines, a physician would be subject to loss of their medical license and fines up to \$3,000.

HB 591 would ban almost all abortions in New Hampshire. This bill would prohibit abortions as early as six weeks into a pregnancy, before most people even know they are pregnant. As a result, most pregnant people would be denied the right to decide about their healthcare before they know they have a decision to make. According to the Guttmacher Institute, just 23% of New Hampshire women live in counties with abortion clinics.ⁱ The passage of HB 591, when combined with existing abortion access barriers, such as transportation demands and cost,ⁱⁱ would amount to a total ban on abortion for most people in New Hampshire.

This legislation places both medical providers and their patients at risk. It imposes potential sanctions on abortion-providing doctors unless the procedure is intended to prevent death or serious health risks. Because there is no clear, universal definition of the point at which a pregnant person's life becomes endangered, even when a physician is certain that an abortion or another intervention which poses a threat to a pregnancy is in the patient's best interest, the risk of prosecution will incentivize waiting to act until the patient's symptoms become demonstrably life-threatening. The threat of professional discipline directly conflicts with a doctor's ability to effectively treat a patient needing medical care.

The vast majority of Granite Staters support safe, legal abortion. Seventy-two percent of polled Granite Staters identified as pro-choice in 2022, rejecting the idea that bodies are public property to be regulated by government officials.ⁱⁱⁱ In fact, only three states have a higher percentage of residents who support safe, legal abortion access.^{iv} As this polling makes clear, Granite Staters don't appreciate government intervention into their private health care decisions.

The New Hampshire Legislature should focus on the pressing economic and health care needs of Granite Staters. Recent data shows New Hampshire ranks last out of its New England counterparts in overall quality of healthcare, measured through cost, accessibility, and health outcomes.^v Additionally, "nearly 100,000 Granite Staters live in poverty," according to the NH Fiscal Policy Network.^{vi} HB 591 would only exacerbate these metrics: women refused abortions are nearly four times as likely to live below the federal poverty line four years later compared to those who had abortions.^{vii} Further, research indicates if abortion is banned throughout the United States, the overall number of maternal deaths would rise by 24 percent.^{viii} Legislators should recognize the devastating impact of abortion bans on women's health outcomes and long-term financial stability and vote inexpedient to legislate on this bill.

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ⁱ Guttmacher Institute, State Facts about Abortion: New Hampshire, Jan. 2022, available at <https://www.guttmacher.org/fact-sheet/state-facts-about-abortion-new-hampshire>.

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- ii Guttmacher Institute, State Facts about Abortion: New Hampshire, Jan. 2021, available at <https://www.guttmacher.org/fact-sheet/state-facts-about-abortion-new-hampshire>.
- iii Neil Levesque, *A Survey of Registered New Hampshire Voters*, August 9-11, 2022, New Hampshire Institute of Politics, Saint Anselm College, available at, https://www.anselm.edu/sites/default/files/Documents/NHIOP/Polls/SACSC_NHSW_0822_Book1.pdf
- iv Jeff Diamant & Aleksandra, *Do state laws on abortion reflect public opinion?*, Pew Research Center, Jan. 21, 2020, available at <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/01/21/do-state-laws-on-abortion-reflect-public-opinion/>.
- v Adam McCann, *The Best & Worst States for Health Care*, WalletHub, Aug 1, 2022, available at <https://wallethub.com/edu/states-with-best-health-care/23457>
- vi New Hampshire Fiscal Policy Institute, *Income & Poverty*, available at <https://nhfpi.org/topic/income-poverty/>
- vii Foster, Diana Greene. *The turnaway study: ten years, a thousand women, and the consequences of having—or being denied—an abortion*. Simon and Schuster, 2021.
- viii Elyssa Spitzre, Tracy Weitz, Maggie Jo Bunchanan, *Abortion Bans Will Result In More Women Dying*, Nov. 2, 2022, Center for American Progress, available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/abortion-bans-will-result-in-more-women-dying/#:~:text=Researchers%20have%20found%20that%20if,would%20rise%20by%2039%20percent>.