

YWCA of Kalamazoo
353 E. Michigan Ave
Kalamazoo, MI 49007

September 14, 2023

Representative Julie Rogers, Chair
Representative Karen Whitsett, Majority Vice Chair
Representative Curtis VanderWall, Minority Vice Chair

RE: Support for Reproductive Health Act HB4949-HB4959

Representative Rogers, Representative Whitsett, Representative VanderWall, and
Members of the Michigan House Health Policy Committee:

**YWCA Kalamazoo supports the Reproductive Health Act (House Bills 4949 –
4959)**

At YWCA Kalamazoo, our mission is to eliminate racism, empower women, and promote peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all. We are deeply committed to advancing racial and gender equity in Kalamazoo and across Michigan. Protecting and expanding reproductive health, rights, and justice are critical to this commitment. We believe that the passage of the Reproductive Health Act is an essential step toward achieving our mission by removing outdated and burdensome state statutes around abortion care (i.e. state-mandated 24-hour delay in care, restrictions on telemedicine, TRAP laws, criminal punishments, and restrictions on Medicaid and private insurance coverage).

Someone's ability to access health care should never depend on where they live, who they are, or how much they earn. Yet, restrictions on, barriers to, and delays in abortion care continue to have devastating impacts on women and birthing people, people of color, survivors of violence, immigrants, LGBTQIA+ and non-binary identities, and those working to make ends meet. Barriers to abortion care can not only jeopardize the safety of a survivor of violence but can be unnecessarily triggering as many may still be healing from attacks on their own bodily autonomy.¹ Lack of access to abortion care can have long-term impacts on one's financial security.² For many Kalamazoo residents, having the financial means or insurance coverage for care remains a challenge, and individuals may have to make the

¹ Roberts, S.C., Biggs, M.A., Chibber, K.S. et al. "Risk of violence from the man involved in the pregnancy after receiving or being denied an abortion." *BMC Med* vol. 12, no. 1 29. Sept 29 (2014). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12916-014-0144-z>

² Foster, Diana Greene, et al. "Socioeconomic Outcomes of Women Who Receive and Women Who Are Denied Wanted Abortions in the United States." *American Journal of Public Health*, vol. 108, no. 3, Mar. 2018, pp. 407–413, <https://doi.org/10.2105/ajph.2017.304247>.

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impossible choice between paying for basic needs for themselves or others and paying for essential health care. Black and Indigenous families, including those across Kalamazoo County, currently face some of the highest rates of maternal and infant mortality³, reflecting a growing national maternal and infant health crisis. With many counties across Michigan experiencing maternal healthcare deserts⁴, removing obstacles to abortion becomes increasingly important to eliminate these health disparities.

YWCA Kalamazoo believes every individual should have the freedom to make their own decisions about pregnancy, parenting, and when, where, and how to form their family. Such freedom requires eliminating barriers to affordable, quality, and comprehensive reproductive healthcare, including abortion. Not only does access to such care reduce health inequities faced by marginalized communities, but it is necessary for individuals to make the personal decisions that allow them to live whole, healthy, and authentic lives. Passing the Reproductive Health Act would address several challenges Michiganders face in accessing abortion care and is necessary to build upon and protect newly codified reproductive rights for those seeking essential health care in this state.

Reproductive health care, including abortion care, must be affordable, available, and accessible to anyone who needs it. Therefore, YWCA Kalamazoo stands in support of the Reproductive Health Act (HB 4949 – 4959). We urge the committee to pass these bills and encourage the Michigan Legislature to continue building upon this critical legislative effort.

In Solidarity,



Lisa Rodriguez
Interim Chief Executive Officer
YWCA Kalamazoo

³ Neumayer, Heidi. "Maternal Deaths in Michigan, 2015-2019 Data Update." Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. (2019). Pp 1-10.

https://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/-/media/Project/Websites/mdhhs/MCH-Epidemiology/MMMS_2015-2019-Report_final.pdf?rev=73c09aa823314d67ba532ddc2927f504&hash=D5A7B808B324EB7AA9FCE5_015546B7D2

⁴ Fontenot, J, L., et al. *Where You Live Matters: Maternity Care Deserts and the Crisis of Access and Equity in Michigan*. (2023). (pp. 1-6). March of Dimes. <https://www.marchofdimes.org/peristats/assets/s3/reports/mcd/Maternity-Care-Report-Michigan.pdf>

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