

Op-Ed: Protect Abortion Access Without Stigma - Vote No on 115

For our foundations, equity is a core value, which means that we work in many ways to ensure that everyone gets what they need. We invest in our communities through grantmaking, advocate to advance more equitable policies and systems, and root all our work in research and community insights. With a shared commitment to the health, well-being and economic security of children, women, families and all people in Colorado, each of our foundations has taken positions on several measures on this year's ballot. One measure, Proposition 115, compels us to raise our collective voices in opposition.

Every pregnancy is unique, and no one can possibly know another person's circumstances. Decisions around pregnancy should be made by each person with advice from their doctors, and in accordance with their beliefs — not by an arbitrary prohibition on a health care procedure. We urge you to vote NO on Proposition 115 to ensure all people in Colorado can get the care they need and better control their health, their bodies, and their economic futures.

If passed, Prop 115 would prohibit abortion after a fetus reaches 22-weeks gestational age and would subject health care providers to misdemeanor charges and medical license suspension if they carry out an abortion at this stage. This measure ignores how unique each pregnancy is. It does not include exceptions for the worst imaginable circumstances – when the parent has been a victim of rape or incest, or their health is at risk. Nor does it provide exceptions for the detection of serious fetal abnormalities, forcing a person into a heartbreaking situation to carry a nonviable pregnancy to term.

Lack of access to the full range of reproductive health care services can lead to dire health consequences. Research shows this increases rates of maternal mortality, including death during childbirth and death after seeking unsafe abortions (Guttmacher Institute). According to the CDC, abortion later in pregnancy represents only about one percent of all abortion care. Sometimes, a person is diagnosed with serious health complications or receives a lethal fetal diagnosis later in their pregnancy. And in some cases, such as when a person is a survivor of rape or incest, or is very young, they may not find out they are pregnant until later in pregnancy. Such complications delay health care decision-making and can lead to poor health outcomes.

Research from the nonpartisan, nonprofit Institute for Women's Policy clearly links a person's complete access to reproductive health care and family planning services to better educational opportunities and economic security. Our foundations support access to the full range of reproductive health information, care, and justice for women statewide and believe that women have the right to decide to have or not to have children, free from stigma. If this proposition passes, it will be the beginning of abortion rights being chipped away in our state. Please join us in voting NO on Proposition 115.

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Visit our websites to learn more about the work of our foundations and to read our position statements on this year's Colorado ballot measures at caringforcolorado.org, rcfdenver.org, and wfco.org.