

PUBLIC COMMENTS

HB 1173

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE AFFAIRS

---

Hearing Date: April 8, 2021 8:00 AM

---

Laila Khalili

Myself

Houston, TX

My name is Laila and I am writing to oppose House Bill 1173.

HB 1173 would ban local governments from budgeting funds to provide practical support services for people seeking abortion care. This bill interferes with the work of local public health officials and undermines abortion access for people in Texas already facing multiple barriers to this essential healthcare.

Texas has dozens of restrictions on abortion care that create systemic obstacles for people seeking abortion care. Practical support abortion funds help people navigate and overcome those barriers. HB 1173 is a direct attack on the most marginalized people in Texas: Black, indigenous and people of color, immigrants, LGBTQ+ people, low-income people, youth, and many people facing trauma and poverty. This bill takes away food, lodging, transportation, and childcare support from people already facing multiple financial and logistical barriers. That my government would spend time taking needed resources away from people is absolutely shameful. It is the exact opposite of what you were elected to do.

For years, Texans have struggled to access even the most basic healthcare, and COVID-19 has only added to those obstacles and pushed many to their financial and psychological limits. Many people are unemployed, have become full-time caregivers to children or elders, and are facing economic insecurity as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. At such a crucial moment, the state government should not be interfering with local leaders' ability to ensure the health and safety of their residents.

For these reasons I oppose HB 1173. And I urge you to oppose it as well.

anne barnard

self

houston, TX

My name is Anne Barnard and I write to oppose House Bill 1173. HB 1173 would ban local governments from budgeting funds to provide practical support services for people seeking abortion care. This bill interferes with the work of local public health officials and undermines abortion access for people in Texas already facing multiple barriers to this essential healthcare.

I personally care about practical support for abortion access!

Texas has dozens of restrictions on abortion care that create systemic obstacles for people seeking abortion care. Practical support abortion funds help people navigate and overcome those barriers. HB 1173 is a direct attack on the most marginalized people in Texas: Black, indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) communities, immigrants, LGBTQ+ people, low-income people, and youth. It takes away food, lodging, transportation, and childcare support from people already facing multiple financial and logistical barriers.

I oppose banning local governments from funding practical support services for abortion access!

For years Texans have struggled to access even the most basic healthcare, and COVID-19 has only added to those obstacles and pushed many to their financial limits. Many people are unemployed, have become full-time caregivers to children or elders, and

Printed on: May 4, 2021 2:21 PM

are facing economic insecurity as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. At such a crucial moment, the state government should not be interfering with local leaders' ability to ensure the health and safety of their residents. For these reasons I oppose HB 1173.

Sincerely,

Anne Barnard

Amy Harding

Self / self employed

AUSTIN, TX

Practical support groups help people navigate and overcome the barriers Texas' archaic, out of touch state leadership has enacted against local governments.

This support helps ensure people can cover critical healthcare access costs, including travel, lodging, meals and childcare.

Practical support funding is especially impactful for communities at the margins, including youth, immigrants, communities of color and members of the LGBTQ community.

Abortion is Healthcare. Period. It is not going away. OPPOSE THIS BILL.

Ella West

Self, Student

Houston, TX

My name is Ella West, and I am writing to oppose House Bill 1173. This bill would prevent local governments from procuring funds to provide supportive services for people seeking abortion care. Not only does the bill interfere with the work of public health officials, but it also continues to undermine abortion access in Texas, making it more difficult for people who are already facing barriers to their healthcare to have access to the fundamental reproductive services they deserve.

As a teenager in Houston, I have seen the need for abortion services firsthand. It is already beyond difficult for women to procure these. It is heartbreaking to watch bills such as this one further restrict women's rights when there is so much work that needs to be done to help them during this time.

Already, Texas has far too many restrictions on abortion care. These are systemic obstacles meant to keep groups of people, BIPOC communities, Black, immigrant, LGBTQ+, low-income, and youth, from seeking abortion care. The support local governments supply to help women procure abortions helps these people overcome such mammoth barriers.

Texas has a dark past of obstructing people from receiving the most basic healthcare. This legacy has only been furthered by COVID-19. In the midst of such tragic times, the last thing the state government should be doing is prohibiting logistical support of local governments.

Once again, for these reasons, I vehemently oppose HB 1173.

Maureen Johnson

self -- medical professional

Austin, TX

My name is Maureen Johnson and I write to oppose House Bill 1173. HB 1173 would ban local governments from budgeting funds to provide practical support services for people seeking abortion care. This bill interferes with the work of local public health officials and undermines abortion access for people in Texas already facing multiple barriers to this essential healthcare.

Printed on: May 4, 2021 2:21 PM

Texas has dozens of restrictions on abortion care that create systemic obstacles for people seeking abortion care. Practical support abortion funds help people navigate and overcome those barriers. HB 1173 is a direct attack on the most marginalized people in Texas: Black, indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) communities, immigrants, LGBTQ+ people, low-income people, and youth. It takes away food, lodging, transportation, and childcare support from people already facing multiple financial and logistical barriers.

For years Texans have struggled to access even the most basic healthcare, and COVID-19 has only added to those obstacles and pushed many to their financial limits. Many people are unemployed, have become full-time caregivers to children or elders, and are facing economic insecurity as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. At such a crucial moment, the state government should not be interfering with local leaders' ability to ensure the health and safety of their residents. For these reasons I oppose HB 1173.

Diana Ball  
self/attorney  
Austin, TX

My name is Diana Ball. I oppose House Bill 1173.

HB 1173 would ban local governments from budgeting funds to provide practical support services for people seeking abortion care. This bill interferes with the work of local public health officials and undermines abortion access for Texas women already facing multiple barriers to this essential healthcare.

As Barbara Bush said in justification of government support for abortion care, "Why should the rich be allowed to afford abortions and the poor not?"

And just as the Texas legislature bristles at the federal government telling it what it can and cannot do, the legislature should resist meddling in what local officials believe is best for the citizens who elected them to represent their community's interests.

Texas already has dozens of restrictions on abortion care that create systemic obstacles for people seeking abortion care. HB 1173 would add yet another barrier by outlawing local communities from providing practical support abortion funds for food, lodging, transportation, and childcare to women who have to navigate and overcome existing barriers like making long drives to the few remaining Texas abortion providers and staying away from home overnight to comply with statutory waiting periods.

In short, the practical cost of accessing abortion care frequently creates a final barrier that only the rich can overcome.

HB 1173 is a direct attack on the most marginalized people in Texas: Black, indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) communities, immigrants, LGBTQ+ people, low-income people, and youth--the very same Texans who for years have struggled to access even the most basic healthcare. And now, on top of everything, COVID-19 has only added to those obstacles and pushed many to their financial limits. Economic recovery will be a long time coming for these impacted Texans.

At such a crucial moment, the state government should not be interfering with local leaders' ability to ensure the health and safety of their residents.

For these reasons, I oppose HB 1173.

Marie Lee  
Self  
Austin, TX

My name is Marie L. and I oppose HBs 1173, 1515, 1280, 2337, 2313, 3218, 3760. In 2019, I terminated a pregnancy for medical reasons. At the time I was close to 40, with two teenagers from a previous marriage, a stressful and demanding job as a police officer, and in the midst of an abusive relationship. My relationship finally ended when my abuser was arrested for assaulting me while I was 3 months pregnant. Shortly after that arrest, I found out that my baby had a life altering medical diagnosis. It was not fatal, but I was faced with multiple heartwrenching dilemmas. I knew that raising a child with special needs would have required

Printed on: May 4, 2021 2:21 PM

me to quit my law enforcement job. Working 12 hour shifts, including nights, on \$50K/yr would not have allowed me the option of affording a full-time nanny or caregiver. And with no college degree, I wouldn't have had the luxury of easily getting another career of equal pay and security. I would have quickly gone from someone already in the working class to someone living in poverty. And with an active felony case against my ex-fiance (delayed by almost a year due to COVID), his alcoholism, and chronic unemployment, I wouldn't have been able to rely on him for assistance, despite the fact he was 50% responsible in the creation of our child. Second, I thought about what my baby's life would be like. Because I loved her I did not want to see her suffer. I did not want her to live a life that consisted of trips in and out of the hospital, multiple surgeries, the stares in public, the exclusion she might face at school, the chance she would have difficulty making friends or living independently. Whatever the reason is for a woman to terminate a pregnancy is one that is highly personal and one that I assure you is incredibly painful and isolating. This was NOT an easy or light hearted decision whatsoever. I loved my baby with my entire heart and soul. The day I lost her was the darkest day of my entire life. After my loss, I was diagnosed with PTSD and spent three weeks in an intensive outpatient program at a behavioral health hospital to help process the trauma of losing my child, ending an abusive relationship, and picking up the pieces to my life again. The truth is we don't know what it's like to be in someone else's shoes. I practice this daily as a police officer, where I do my best to treat people with fairness and dignity. My hope is that the state will realize that this is not a black vs white, good vs bad, liberal vs conservative issue. Because the truth is abortion comes in all ages, ethnicities, religions, socio-economic backgrounds, marital status, and political orientation. Each of us had to experience a horrific event that had a lasting impact on us. While the men in our lives may have been able to walk away unscathed, I believe that any woman who has been through this is no longer the same person she was before. I ask you to hear our names and our stories. Thank you for your time.

Veronika Granado

Self

San Antonio, TX

My name is Veronika Granado and I write to oppose House Bill 1173. HB 1173 would ban local governments from budgeting funds to provide practical support services for people seeking abortion care. This bill interferes with the work of local public health officials and undermines abortion access for people in Texas already facing multiple barriers to this essential healthcare. Being able to get an abortion access and get funding from abortion funds helped me start my future. Before I got pregnant I was planning to go to university to get a degree in engineering and I did because of my abortion. If not, I would've been forced to quit and support this child that I was no where near capable of at the time.

Texas has dozens of restrictions on abortion care that create systemic obstacles for people seeking abortion care. Practical support abortion funds help people navigate and overcome those barriers. HB 1173 is a direct attack on the most marginalized people in Texas: Black, indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) communities, immigrants, LGBTQ+ people, low-income people, and youth. It takes away food, lodging, transportation, and childcare support from people already facing multiple financial and logistical barriers.

[practical support helps so many Texans to be able to access abortions without that extra barrier along with the countless others than prevents people from getting abortions.

For years Texans have struggled to access even the most basic healthcare, and COVID-19 has only added to those obstacles and pushed many to their financial limits. Many people are unemployed, have become full-time caregivers to children or elders, and are facing economic insecurity as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. At such a crucial moment, the state government should not be interfering with local leaders' ability to ensure the health and safety of their residents. For these reasons I oppose HB 1173.

Kim Jorns

self

Ft Worth, TX

It seems so unbelievable we even need to address this issue, especially to this degree! Whether to save a helpless baby still breathing and heartbeat pumping!! The horrible times we are living in are taking what used to be called despicable and turning into normal! I urge you to consider the voice of the infant whose life will hang in the balance! We should always consider speaking for the innocent, even if the mother doesn't realize that! We treat animals better! If we don't revere the process by which all human beings exist, all of us are threatened. Please vote FOR the Heartbeat Bill Texans!! Thank you.

Maureen Powers

Printed on: May 4, 2021 2:21 PM

retired

Austin, TX

I oppose this bill for the reason that its ultimate goal, which is to restrict women's access to healthcare, offends my belief that women are sentient beings able to decide for themselves whether an abortion is in their best interest. I am also offended by the Republican sponsors of the bill's hypocritical stance in support of local control of government in general, but not in this instance.

Melissa Gaskill

Self

Austin, TX

I oppose HB 1173. Texas has too many restrictions on abortion care and makes it too hard for people to access this legal right. Practical support funds help people navigate and overcome those barriers. Abortion access is an economic justice issue and this funding is vital to the health and safety of people seeking abortion care and their community.

Isabel Ray, Mrs.

self; communications

Austin, TX

I oppose HB 1173. I believe that a city, a county, a state has a responsibility to provide certain services for its people--that is why we form communities. Many of the committee members likely disagree, citing a conservative value of "small government"--is it really "small government" for the State of Texas to prevent cities from managing their own budgets? This bill does not help or protect anyone, including the taxpayer; it is designed only to put more barriers in the way of people who are accessing their constitutional right to abortion.

Remember that by passing this bill, you will not affect the status of taxpayer money regarding actual abortion procedures; Texas already prevents public money from being spent in that way. Rather, by passing this bill you will stop people from getting childcare, lodging, and transportation. Passing this bill will show that conservatives are not truly in favor of small government, but instead want to exert control.

I strongly oppose HB 1173 and ask each member of the committee to vote against it.

Edith Corbitt

Self

Whitney, TX

I'm opposed to any legislation that limits patients choice of healthcare. Patients and healthcare professionals should make these decisions the government has no place regulating patient availability to healthcare providers or procedures.

Anna Rupani

Fund Texas Choice

Irving, TX

My name is Anna Rupani, and I am co-director of Fund Texas Choice, an organization that provides practical support to people in Texas facing barriers to abortion access. This comment is in OPPOSITION to HB 1173. We know first-hand the ways in which lack of resources can push abortion out of reach for people already struggling to get by, and know that funding is vital. Texas has multiple restrictions on abortion care that create real obstacles for people who need access to abortion care. Practical support abortion funds help people navigate and overcome those barriers.

Printed on: May 4, 2021 2:21 PM

The Austin City Council made history in 2019 by funding \$150,000 for logistical support for Austinites seeking abortion care for the first time. Council voted to increase the funding to a total of \$250,000 in 2020. Austin City Council are duly elected leaders representing their constituents. State representatives should not be dictating what city representatives can and cannot do. Attacks like HB 1173 aren't only attacks on cities and local control—they're an attack on the communities most impacted by abortion restrictions and those who are already shut out from accessing all forms of health care. Funding helps us outreach to marginalized people in the community to ensure that those most likely to face barriers to access, know that there is funding to help them. Because Black, Indigenous, and people of color, LGBTQ+ people, and undocumented people are disproportionately impacted by economic inequality and lack of access to adequate resources, we also experience the impact of logistical barriers to abortion access disproportionately. Some of these barriers are logistical -- marginalized people are more likely to live further away from an abortion provider and therefore have extra transportation considerations and costs, work in jobs that restrict their ability to take time off for care or in which they lose wages taking time off for care, and struggle to find healthcare generally. Some barriers are literally the barrier of oppression itself: BIPOC and LGBTQ+ people struggle to find reproductive healthcare environments free from racism and affirming of their full identities.

The experience of racism itself, particularly in healthcare environments, acts as a barrier to abortion care. In the case of LGBTQ+ people, assumptions about gender and reproduction create emotional harms and might even prevent people from seeking abortion care in settings where they know they will have their identities undermined. Undocumented people face the general fear that every interaction with a healthcare provider presents the possibility of having their status uncovered. This is why it is essential that the organizations providing practical support exist. We not only provide the material practical support, but we provide emotional support as well -- sometimes simply by being a friendly and supportive voice on the other end of the line for someone who may be going through this process alone.

Kendall Bentsen  
self, Organizer  
Houston, TX

I strongly oppose HB 1173. It amounts to nothing more than a thinly veiled attempt to further entrench hostility towards pregnant women into Texas law. Rather than further curtailing access to abortion, the Texas legislature should focus on the true threats to women and infant health, including access to quality healthcare, intimate partner violence, and maternal mortality, of which Texas ranks in the top 20% in the country. If you really value life, value the people who create life, respect their decisions and stop trying to coerce them into doing what you want.

Tom Goranson  
self, attorney  
Dallas, TX

- I oppose passing of HB 1173 and all of the following bills as well.

HB 1515: • HB 1280: • HB 2313: • HB 2337: • HB 3218: • HB 3760:

Kamyon Conner, LCSW  
Texas Equal Access Fund  
Dallas, TX

My name is Kamyon Conner, and I am the executive director of Texas Equal Access Fund, or TEA Fund, and I oppose House Bill 1173, a dangerous bill that would strip away access to abortion and healthcare services. TEA Fund is an abortion fund that serves the northern half of Texas. We provide funding for abortions and do advocacy work to increase access to this essential health care. Every day, we hear from callers who are struggling to access abortion, so we know first hand the dangers that arise from unnecessary restrictions such as the one in HB 1173. Texas has multiple restrictions on abortion care that create real obstacles for people who need access to abortion care. Practical support abortion funds help people navigate and overcome those barriers. Therefore, this bill would put abortion completely out of reach for anyone in our state who needs one. The implications from that are dire. More and more, as state leaders continue to fail us, it's up to our local leaders to ensure the health and safety of their

Printed on: May 4, 2021 2:21 PM

residents by ensuring people in Texas can access abortion care. Abortion access is an economic justice issue and this funding is vital to the health and safety of people seeking abortion care and their community. HB 1173 would limit access to abortion and healthcare. Practical support funding is especially impactful for communities at the margins, including young people, immigrants, BIPOC individuals and members of the LGBTQ community. If we have learned anything over the past year, it is that we must prioritize the healthcare of Texans and increase access in always that we can. This bill does the opposite. For these reasons, I urge the committee to vote no on HB 1173. I urge the committee to vote against this bill and show Texans that they matter. Texans deserve this access.

Lauren Dolan

Fund Texas Choice

Austin, TX

My name is Lauren Dolan and I write to oppose House Bill 1173. HB 1173 would ban local governments from budgeting funds to provide practical support services for people seeking abortion care. This bill interferes with the work of local public health officials and undermines abortion access for people in Texas already facing multiple barriers to this essential healthcare.

With the limited number of abortion clinics, expenses such as travel and accommodation can quickly add up and be a real barrier to those seeking abortion.

Texas has dozens of restrictions on abortion care that create systemic obstacles for people seeking abortion care. Practical support abortion funds help people navigate and overcome those barriers. HB 1173 is a direct attack on the most marginalized people in Texas: Black, indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) communities, immigrants, LGBTQ+ people, low-income people, and youth. It takes away food, lodging, transportation, and childcare support from people already facing multiple financial and logistical barriers.

For years Texans have struggled to access even the most basic healthcare, and COVID-19 has only added to those obstacles and pushed many to their financial limits. Many people are unemployed, have become full-time caregivers to children or elders, and are facing economic insecurity as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. At such a crucial moment, the state government should not be interfering with local leaders' ability to ensure the health and safety of their residents. For these reasons I oppose HB 1173.

Katherine McGovern

SELF

Dallas, TX

House Bill 1173 would ban local governments from budgeting their funds to provide practical support services for people seeking abortion care. Why should any woman needing medical care be denied access? HB 1173 is simply seeking to punish and harm women who have chosen to determine when and whether they will continue a pregnancy. Texas has dozens of laws restricting abortion that create major obstacles for people who need care. Practical support groups help people navigate and overcome those barriers. As Texas state leaders continue to fail us, it's up to our local leaders to ensure people can cover critical healthcare access costs, including travel, lodging, meals and childcare. Practical support funding is especially impactful for communities at the margins, including youth, immigrants, communities of color and members of the LGBTQ. vote NO on 1173.

Sahra Harvin

self, Program Coordinator of Fund Texas Choice

Houston, TX

I am against HB 1173. Texas has multiple restrictions on abortion care that create real obstacles for people who need access to abortion care. Practical support abortion funds help people navigate and overcome those barriers. Texas has over 260,000 square miles, but only 21 abortion clinics. There are no clinics West of San Antonio. Publicly funding travel expenses for folks who need abortions in Austin is the only way to help many Texans access the care they need. Abortion access is an economic justice issue and this funding is vital to the health and safety of people seeking abortion care and their community. More and more, as state leaders continue to fail us, it's up to our local leaders to ensure the health and safety of their residents by ensuring people in Texas can access abortion care. Practical support funding is especially impactful for communities at the margins, including young

Printed on: May 4, 2021 2:21 PM

people, immigrants, BIPOC individuals and members of the LGBTQ community.

Sarah Lopez, Program Coordinator/Patient Navigator

Fund Texas Choice

Austin, TX

My name is Sarah Lopez and I am submitting my public comment on behalf of Fund Texas Choice. Fund Texas Choice is a practical support abortion fund that helps Texans get to their abortion appointments by providing assistance with transportation and lodging. My role as program coordinator and patient navigator involves making travel arrangements for our clients (including finding hotels, providing costs for food, booking flights, etc.), coordinating with funds and clinics, and checking in with folks throughout their trip to make sure they feel supported throughout the complex process of navigating barriers to access.

As someone who helps people access abortion care every day, as a lifelong Texan, and as someone who has had an abortion, I urge this committee to vote no on HB 1173.

Many arguments from those in favor of this bill are deeply stigmatizing and do not center the pregnant person's needs nor their health. By the time someone reaches out to us for travel assistance, they've made their decision. They've had to take time off work, or if they're unemployed have had to advocate for themselves to get support paying for the procedure, find last-minute childcare, and prepare to travel during a pandemic. This is all due to the harmful abortion restrictions in place here in Texas that target marginalized communities. Our mission is to minimize those barriers and make abortion access a reality for any Texan who needs one.

The assistance we offer ranges from gas money or rideshares to bus or plane tickets and one or more nights in a hotel near the clinic. We also work closely with other abortion funds and clinics to ensure that the people we serve have all the support they need throughout their trip. In a state like Texas where we have had some of the highest COVID rates in addition to a natural disaster, lawmakers should focus on addressing any of the crises our state is currently facing instead of attacking abortion access.

This bill is a direct attack on the people we serve. State leaders have been failing us, so it is up to city officials to represent their constituents. By allowing local municipalities to make decisions on where the funding goes, the power goes back to the people. Austin City Council is made up of duly elected representatives whose job it is to appropriate local funds. For the state government to interfere with the will of the voters, is a hypocritical, political move motivated by their extremism. This Bill would impact funding that goes towards practical support for people seeking an abortion. We have seen the impact of this type of funding with the City of Austin and the clients we have helped. The city decided and should be the one to continue to decide on how money is allocated, the state shouldn't take that away from constituents. Everyone loves someone who had an abortion.

Anjali Salvador, J.D.

National Institute for Reproductive Health (NIRH), National Institute for Reproductive Health Action Fund, All\* Above All, All\* Above All Action Fund

Houston, TX

The National Institute for Reproductive Health (NIRH), the NIRH Action Fund, and All\* Above All Action Fund oppose HB 1173. As the Supreme Court affirmed last year, abortion access is a constitutional right. But in practice, it is costly and logistically complicated. Austin tried to ease this difficulty by allocating funding to practical support for abortions in 2020 and 2021, including services like lodging and transportation.

The Austin City Council's job is to advocate for the health and welfare of its inhabitants. Cities tailor budgets to residents' most urgent needs; the state should not interfere with their efforts to ensure that people have access to needed services. Austin allocated funding to practical support for abortion because it viewed doing so as an important part of improving access to necessary, time-sensitive healthcare. Its choice should be respected.

The reality is that abortions require additional costs that can be insurmountable. Abortions themselves are costly: along with the federal Hyde Amendment, Texas state law prohibits insurance coverage of abortions. But out-of-pocket costs are only the beginning. Nearly half of Texas' counties are over 100 miles from a clinic, a barrier compounded by the state-required waiting

Printed on: May 4, 2021 2:21 PM

period between the first clinic visit and getting an abortion. Thus, getting an abortion often involves long drives, transportation costs, childcare costs, lost wages, and hotel stays.

HB 1173 is not only a deliberate attempt to undercut constitutional rights, but also will cause great harm. Research shows that women denied abortions are 1) more likely to live below the poverty level; 2) more likely to experience serious complications from the end of pregnancy; and 3) more likely to remain with abusive partners. Research also shows that increasing barriers to abortion access in Texas disproportionately harms people of color and people who are struggling to make ends meet.

This attack on access to healthcare is particularly perverse during a pandemic. Texas has the largest number of people without health insurance in the country, and pandemic job loss has stripped hundreds of thousands of their health insurance. Also, last year Gov. Abbott and A.G. Paxton exploited the pandemic to falsely frame abortion care as medically unnecessary, resulting in clinic closures. While access to care was restored, almost 1,000 Texans had to leave the state in order to obtain abortions, placing themselves at greater risk of exposure to COVID-19—and an untold number of people were not able to get care at all.

By passing HB 1173, the legislature would deny cities the opportunity to provide for their residents' health and well-being at a time when they desperately need support, harming Texans and stigmatizing access to reproductive healthcare. State governments should be increasing access to healthcare, not tying the hands of local officials who are trying to help people. This committee should not advance HB 1173.

Malkia Hutchinson-Arvizu

Self

Houston, TX

My name is Malkia Hutchinson-Arvizu and I oppose House Bill HB 1173. The state of Texas has restricted abortion so much that it has become virtually inaccessible for a large number of Texans. Practical support organizations are often the only way for people who are already parents, people who work shift jobs, and those without their own transportation to receive abortion care. This bill makes it impossible for cities and counties who stand for reproductive justice and the right for all people to determine their reproductive destinies to partner with these organizations and help Texans in need. This legislative body has failed time and time again to actually lift Texans out of poverty, expand access to healthcare, invest in public education, and address Black maternal mortality. Practical support organizations have been and will continue to stand in the gap for those Texans you all continue to leave behind by your negligence in addressing their material needs.

Blair Wallace, Policy & Advocacy Strategist

ACLU of Texas

Houston, TX

Written Testimony Against House Bill 1173 by:

Blair Wallace

Policy & Advocacy Strategist

American Civil Liberties Union of Texas

Dear Chairperson and Members of the State Affairs Committee:

I am submitting this written testimony against HB 1173 because it harms our most vulnerable community members. Low-income Texans and communities of color are those most hurt by abortion restrictions.

Texas has pushed abortion care out of reach for too many people. Medically unnecessary anti-abortion laws have shuttered clinics, so now Texans must drive several hours to get care. A mandatory 24-hour waiting period means people sometimes have to stay overnight for appointments, requiring a hotel or other lodging. Texans lack guaranteed paid sick leave and lose income when they have to miss work to obtain abortion care. And the majority of people seeking abortion care are already parenting so, they need to find child care for often several days. Public and private health insurance are prohibited from covering abortion in Texas. For all these reasons, practical support costs like travel, lodging, food and child care can be impossible to afford, on top of paying out-of-pocket for abortion care.

Printed on: May 4, 2021 2:21 PM

Practical support grants from local public health departments help to fill these gaps. Local governments can budget resources for travel, lodging, meals, child care to facilitate access to healthcare for their constituents. In 2019, Austin City Council made history by budgeting logistical support for Austinites seeking abortion care for the first time. Given that 40% of Americans could not cover an emergency cost of \$400, practical support of abortion care is a powerful way to ensure Texans can access the healthcare they need.

I would really hope that after the year we have endured during a grief-filled pandemic, you would take this opportunity to focus on providing healthcare for Texans and not taking it away. Our state policies should create a floor, not an absolute ceiling. Shouldn't we instead be focusing on supporting our localities across our state instead of setting these restrictive standards?

On behalf of the tens of thousands of Texans we represent, we oppose this legislation on the strongest of terms and encourage the members of this committee not to refer this bill out of committee.

Neesha Davé, Ms.

Lilith Fund

Austin, TX

We oppose HB 1173. HB 1173 directly attacks the people who are most impacted by abortion restrictions and who are already shut out from accessing all forms of healthcare -- low-income communities and communities of color. Instead of trying to defund access to healthcare, our state leaders should be working to address the many crises facing Texans right now, like the COVID-19 pandemic, the recent winter storm and energy crisis, and the unacceptable maternal mortality rates among Black Texans.

HB 1173 will prevent governments in Texas from being able to assist Texans seeking abortion care by offering logistical support to those Texans. Decades of attacks and restrictions on abortion have created often insurmountable barriers to care for people who are already struggling to get affordable health care, and the restrictions disproportionately impact low-income people, people of color, young people, immigrants, and those who live in rural communities.

Abortion funds and practical support groups like ours have had to take action to support fellow Texans in navigating medically unnecessary and dangerous restrictions to care, and to advocate to ensure that local governments support their constituents in accessing the essential health care the state has pushed out of reach.

Practical support grants from local public health departments help to fill the funding gaps by budgeting resources for travel, lodging, meals, childcare to facilitate access to healthcare for their constituents. Given that “nearly 40% of Americans can’t cover surprise \$400 expense,” according to a 2019 CBS report by Alain Sherter, practical support of abortion care is a powerful way to ensure Texans can access the healthcare they need.

HB 1173 is unnecessary state interference into the purvey of local public health officials. We urge the committee to oppose the bill.

Johnny Busquets

Self, Graduate Student

Austin, TX

My name is Johnny and I write to oppose House Bill 1173. HB 1173 would ban local governments from budgeting funds to provide practical support services for people seeking abortion care. This bill interferes with the work of local public health officials and undermines abortion access for people in Texas already facing multiple barriers to this essential healthcare.

Texas has dozens of restrictions on abortion care that create systemic obstacles for people seeking abortion care. Practical support abortion funds help people navigate and overcome those barriers. HB 1173 is a direct attack on the most marginalized people in Texas: Black, indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) communities, immigrants, LGBTQ+ people, low-income people, and youth. It takes away food, lodging, transportation, and childcare support from people already facing multiple financial and

Printed on: May 4, 2021 2:21 PM

logistical barriers.

For years Texans have struggled to access even the most basic healthcare, and COVID-19 has only added to those obstacles and pushed many to their financial limits. Many people are unemployed, have become full-time caregivers to children or elders, and are facing economic insecurity as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. At such a crucial moment, the state government should not be interfering with local leaders' ability to ensure the health and safety of their residents. For these reasons I oppose HB 1173.

Stephanie Villanueva (she/her)

self - public health graduate student

Cypress, TX

My name is Stephanie Villanueva (she/her/hers) and I write to oppose House Bill 1173. HB 1173 would ban local governments from budgeting funds to provide practical support services for people seeking abortion care. This bill interferes with the work of local public health officials and undermines abortion access for people in Texas already facing multiple barriers to this essential healthcare.

I personally care about practical support for abortion access, because abortion is healthcare, and as a Public Health graduate student, I deeply care about access to health services for vulnerable communities, especially poor women, Black women, women of color.

Texas has dozens of restrictions on abortion care that create systemic obstacles for people seeking abortion care. Practical support abortion funds help people navigate and overcome those barriers. HB 1173 is a direct attack on the most marginalized people in Texas: Black, Indigenous Peoples and people of color (BIPOC) communities, immigrants, LGBTQ+ people, low-income people, and youth. It takes away food, lodging, transportation, and childcare support from people already facing multiple financial and logistical barriers.

I oppose banning local governments from funding practical support services for abortion access, because abortion services should be accessible for anyone that needs them.

For years Texans have struggled to access even the most basic healthcare, and COVID-19 has only added to those obstacles and pushed many to their financial limits. Many people are unemployed, have become full-time caregivers to children or elders, and are facing economic insecurity as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. At such a crucial moment, the state government should not be interfering with local leaders' ability to ensure the health and safety of their residents. For these reasons I oppose HB 1173.

CARISA BALMOS

Jane's Due Process

Richardson, TX

My name is Carisa Balmos, and I write to oppose House Bill 1173. HB 1173 would ban local governments from budgeting funds to provide practical support services for people seeking abortion care. This bill interferes with the work of local public health officials and undermines abortion access for people in Texas already facing multiple barriers to this essential healthcare.

Texas has dozens of restrictions on abortion care that create systemic obstacles for people seeking abortion care. Practical support abortion funds help people navigate and overcome those barriers. HB 1173 is a direct attack on the most marginalized people in Texas: Black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) communities, immigrants, LGBTQ+ people, low-income people, and youth. It takes away food, lodging, transportation, and childcare support from people already facing multiple financial and logistical barriers. Abortion access is an economic justice issue, and this funding is vital to the health and safety of people seeking abortion care and their community. More and more, as state leaders continue to fail us, it's up to our local leaders to ensure the health and safety of their residents by ensuring people in Texas can access abortion care.

For years Texans have struggled to access even the most basic healthcare, and COVID-19 has only added to those obstacles and pushed many to their financial limits. Many people are unemployed, have become full-time caregivers to children or elders, and are facing economic insecurity as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. At such a crucial moment, the state government should not be interfering with local leaders' ability to ensure the health and safety of their residents. For these reasons, I oppose HB 1173.

Printed on: May 4, 2021 2:21 PM

Hannah Thalenberg  
Self, abortion funder  
Houston, TX

My name is Hannah Thalenberg and I write to oppose House Bill 1173. HB 1173 would ban local governments from budgeting funds to provide practical support services for people seeking abortion care. This bill interferes with the work of local public health officials and undermines abortion access for people in Texas already facing multiple barriers to this essential health care.

One of the things I am proudest to do for my community is to drive people in the Houston area to and from their abortion appointments as a Clinic Access Support Network volunteer. The sheer size of our city makes it difficult for people to access the abortions they need, including because the time required to travel to and from a clinic is time for which they may lose wages and need to secure childcare. My local government is best positioned to help meet these needs at an adequate scale, and I do not want the State to preclude this possibility.

Texas has dozens of restrictions on abortion care that create systemic obstacles for people seeking abortion care. We at practical support abortion funds help people navigate and overcome those barriers. HB 1173 is a direct attack on the most marginalized people in Texas: Black and Indigenous people of color, immigrants, queer and trans people, youth, and folks struggling to make ends meet for themselves and their families. It takes away food, lodging, transportation, and childcare support from people already facing multiple financial and logistical barriers.

I am an abortion fund volunteer because I know that my ability to navigate Texas' restrictions when I needed an abortion rested on privilege. I want every person who makes the decision to have an abortion in order to care for themselves and their family to be able to expect the same access I had \*and more.\*

For years Texans have struggled to access even the most basic healthcare, and COVID-19 has only added to those obstacles and pushed many to their financial limits. Many people are unemployed, have become full-time caregivers to children or elders, and are facing economic insecurity as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. At such a crucial moment, the state government should not be interfering with local leaders' ability to ensure the health and safety of their residents. For these reasons I oppose HB 1173.

Emily Martin  
Avow  
Austin, TX

My name is Emily Martin and I am Deputy Director at Avow, formerly NARAL Pro-Choice Texas. I have a masters in Public Health and have dedicated my career to ensuring that Texans are able to access the health care they want and need. We urge this committee to vote no on HB 1173.

Texas is and has been in a serious public health crisis. It is the responsibility of this body to expand access to all health care rather than restrict it. This bill is a direct attack on a program the Austin City Council set up to fill a gap in services that their constituents needed and does not violate any existing abortion restrictions in Texas. This budget initiative provides practical and logistical support, like child care, travel expenses, food and lodging, and in no way pays for abortion care. It is so shameful that our legislators are trying to end a practical support program that EXPANDS access to abortion care for Texans when they could be removing more barriers to help their constituents get the health care they need.

Practical support services are critical for communities that have already been marginalized by institutionalized and systemic oppression. Abortion access is a racial, gender and economic justice issue. And is so often out of reach for folks due to the many barriers that have been placed by state leaders over the past 10 years.

As our state leaders continue to fail us, Texans must rely on their local leaders to ensure that they will be able to access necessary services that include medical care and abortion. Local officials are elected to represent their constituents best interests and can and should allot budget money to expand access to care. This support is especially essential for marginalized communities who, thanks to the compounding crises of COVID-19 and the most extreme winter storm of our lifetime, have increased practical

Printed on: May 4, 2021 2:21 PM

support needs for things like lodging, travel, and childcare.

The people of Austin elected their city council members because they promised to expand abortion access. For the state government to interfere with the will of Austin voters is a hypocritical, political move motivated by their extremism. The hypocrisy of anti-abortion lawmakers touting “local control” and then interfering with local budgets and policies is astounding. We urge this committee to vote no on HB 1173.

Anuradha Koli

Self

Austin, TX

I am opposed to this bill because it is ridiculous. Once again, the Texas GOP wants to hinder critical healthcare access for women by prohibiting local communities from funding abortion care. By limiting local governments and organizations from supporting women’s healthcare, women and families will suffer. Do not pass this bill.

Mary Ambrose

self

Austin, TX

I wish to comment and voice my concern about several bills intended to restrict access to, criminalize, and otherwise harm people seeking the provision of an abortion in Texas, including HB 1515, HB 1280, HB 2337, HB 2313, HB 3218, HB 1173 and HB 3760. Individually and as a whole these bills would have harmful impacts for people seeking an abortion and disempower these individuals from making decisions about their own life and well-being. Instead of shaming and criminalizing individuals seeking abortion through legislative attack, elected officials should be aspiring to make changes that align with the values and improve the well-being of their constituents. Polling by the Texas Politics Project in February 2021 found that 55% of Texans believe that abortion laws should either be less strict or left as they are now, compared to 32% that believe they should be more strict (<https://texaspolitics.utexas.edu/set/should-abortion-laws-be-more-or-less-strict-february-2021>). Proposed bills that further restrict access to abortion such as HB 1515, HB 1280, HB 2337, HB 2313, HB 3218, HB 1173 and HB 3760 do not line up with the opinion of most Texans and would cause unnecessary harm to individuals seeking an abortion and I urge you not to support these proposals.

Joe Pojman, Dr.

Texas Alliance For Life

Austin, TX

Testimony of Joe Pojman, Ph.D.

House State Affairs Committee

Supporting House Bill 1173

April 8, 2021

My name is Dr. Joe Pojman. I am the Executive Director of Texas Alliance for Life, and I am speaking for that organization in support of House Bill 1173.

In 2019, the Legislature passed Senate Bill 22, sponsored by Representative Noble, to prevent any abortion provider or affiliate of an abortion provider from receiving tax dollars from the state and any political subdivision.

The Legislature made a statement that tax dollars should not be used to provide or promote abortion.

That law has been tremendously successful. In Travis County alone, Planned Parenthood, which runs the largest chain of abortion facilities in Texas and in the nation, lost more than \$1,000,000 in contracts.

Printed on: May 4, 2021 2:21 PM

Those were with the City of Austin and the Travis County Hospital District.

Low-income women in Texas gained better services than Planned Parenthood offered. The State's Healthy Texas Women program has more than 3,000 providers across the state, including in rural areas, serving nearly 300,000 women.

That program provides all the women's health services offered by Planned Parenthood and more, except abortion. All the Healthy Texas Women's services are free. Planned Parenthood has only a few dozen sites, all of which are in urban areas.

However, one municipality has found a way around the intent of the Legislature. The City of Austin has appropriated \$550,000 for "abortion logistics services," including counseling, transportation, housing, childcare, meals, and other services to help women (and minor girls) obtain abortions at taxpayer expense. The grantees — Jane's Due Process, Fund Texas Choice, and Mama Sana Vibrant Women — are not abortion providers or affiliates of abortion providers. They are not excluded by SB 22. Yet, they are clearly using tax dollars to promote elective abortion, including on minor girls.

Our understanding is that the funds for the appropriation comes from the City of Austin's General Fund, which comes from

- Property tax,
- Sales tax,
- Parking fees, and
- Other fees.

The General Fund does not derive revenue from:

- State funds, and
- Federal funds.

That means that all of us who live, work, or purchase goods and services in Austin participate in promoting abortion, which many residents are deeply opposed to.

HB 1173 will fix that. With a simple change to current law, HB 1173 merely prevents tax dollars from being spent for abortion logistics services. It protects taxpayers, and it protects unborn babies.

National figures tell us that of pregnant women 82 percent choose to give birth, why doesn't the City of Austin consider funding for transportation to life affirming pregnancy centers? Those organizations help women with prenatal care, childbirth, and a whole range of services for as long as 36 months after the birth. There are more than 20 in the greater Austin area.

Thank you.

Sonya Roberts

Myself

Wimberley, TX

Please vote no. This bill would cripple the system, creating many unwanted or deadly pregnancies for those without means to seek abortions for health or other reasons.