



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrea Stewart-Cousins

## Standing Up For Women's Rights: Senate Majority Passes Historic Pro-Women Legislation

ANDREA STEWART-COUSINS January 22, 2019

| ISSUE: **REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH ACT (RHA)**

Albany, NY- The Senate Majority today passed a series of historic legislation that will protect and ensure New York women's health rights. Passed on the 46th anniversary of the Roe v. Wade Supreme Court decision, the Reproductive Health Act (RHA) will codify that decision into New York law and modernize New York's statutes to protect women's rights. The Senate Majority also passed the Comprehensive Contraception Coverage Act (CCCA) that will ensure insurance companies cover FDA-approved contraceptive drugs, devices and products. Additionally, the Boss Bill that passed will prevent an employer's religious beliefs from infringing on women's health care decisions. The Senate Majority, together with the Assembly Majority, passed these three important bills through the Legislature swiftly to ensure New York State again becomes a leader in the fight to protect and expand women's rights.

"New York once led the way on choice and women's rights. Unfortunately for years barriers to women's rights were put up, and our state has fallen behind," Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins said. "Today, we are tearing those barriers down and we are now leading the way again. I commend my colleague Speaker Heastie, the Senate and Assembly bill sponsors, and the Senate and Assembly Majorities for taking historic action and leading

New York State forward in the fight for women's rights. It is time for New York to again serve as a progressive beacon to the nation."

Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie said, "The Assembly Majority has long been a champion of women's reproductive rights. These bills will ensure New Yorkers can control their family planning decisions, have access to the reproductive healthcare they need and will not be discriminated against for their choices. While the administration in Washington continues its assault on women's reproductive rights, the Assembly Majority remains dedicated to fighting for a woman's right to choose. With our new partners in the Senate, we look forward to finally seeing this legislation pass both houses and signed into law on the anniversary of the historic Roe v. Wade decision."

Reproductive Health Act sponsor, Senator Liz Krueger said, "The decision about whether to have an abortion is deeply personal. It involves a complex weighing of a woman's unique circumstances, her medical needs, her private morality, and her own body. That is why it is a decision that must be made by a woman and her healthcare provider alone – not by the government. Our abortion laws, once groundbreaking, are now almost fifty years old. They do not meet the standard set by Roe v. Wade, and they do not reflect modern medical practice. We will never know how many New York women have suffered and even died because our outdated laws prevented them from getting the care they desperately needed. Today we turn the page. By enacting the RHA, the CCCA, and the Boss Bill, New York will once again lead the nation on women's reproductive healthcare, and help ensure that all New Yorkers have the freedom and opportunity to make their own decisions about their health and their families."

Comprehensive Contraception Coverage Act sponsor, Senator Julia Salazar said, "The CCCA ensures that more New Yorkers will be empowered to make informed decisions regarding their reproductive health without having to worry about the cost or whether they will have

access to a full range of contraceptive options. I am proud to have sponsored this legislation in the Senate and to advocate for securing women's rights through the RHA and CCCA.”

Boss Bill sponsor, Senator Jen Metzger said, “I am proud to sponsor the Boss Bill and co-sponsor the Reproductive Health Act (RHA) and Comprehensive Contraceptive Coverage Act (CCCA), which together provide essential protections for women’s health and guarantee their fundamental right to make reproductive choices that are best for them and their families. With threats to these basic protections at the federal level, it is all the more important that we pass this legislation to protect New Yorkers. Governments and employers should not dictate an individual’s options or punish their healthcare decisions.”

The historic legislation passed by the Senate Democratic Majority includes:

**Reproductive Health Act:** This bill, S.240, introduced by Senator Krueger, will modernize New York’s nearly 50-year-old statutes regarding abortion and ensure that New York State law treats abortion as health care, not a criminal act. The Assembly has passed this version of the RHA in 2017 and 2018.

**Comprehensive Contraception Coverage Act:** This bill, S.659-A, introduced by Senator Julia Salazar, will require health insurance companies to include coverage of all FDA-approved contraceptive options, as well as contraceptive counseling, and services. The Assembly first passed this legislation in 2015.

**Boss Bill:** This bill, S.660, introduced by Senator Jen Metzger, will ensure that employees or their dependents are able to make their own reproductive health care decisions without incurring adverse employment consequences. The Assembly has passed it each year since 2014.

Senate Deputy Majority Leader Michael Gianaris said, “Protecting women's health choices empowers New Yorkers to plan families and make the right medical decisions for them. I am proud to support these proposals and am honored to be part of the new New York Senate that is enacting these bills.”

Senator Jamaal Bailey said, “The passage of the Reproductive Health Act, the Comprehensive Contraception Coverage Act, and the Boss Bill are historic victories for women’s rights in the state of New York. No woman should ever be met with an undue burden or discriminated against for her choice. As the father of two young girls and the husband to an incredible woman, I am proud to be a part of a legislature that prioritizes women’s rights.”

Senator Brian Benjamin said, “The bills we are passing today are about justice—plain and simple. Social justice, economic justice, and racial justice for the women of our state, who have been prevented from making decisions for themselves for far too long. When we give women the power of self-determination, we have more women in the workforce, more women in education, more women running for office—more women doing what they want to do the way they want to do it. New Yorkers deserve more than access to healthcare, choice, and equality; they deserve a guarantee. Today, under the leadership of our first female majority leader, we take an important step towards that guarantee.”

Senator Alessandra Biaggi said, “This is a historic day not only for women, but also for New York State. There is no coincidence that 2018 was the year of the woman, where we saw a record number of women running for and elected to office. There is no coincidence that our state reclaimed its democratic majority with the most women elected ever in the legislature. There is no coincidence that today - by passing the Reproductive Health Act, Comprehensive Contraception Coverage Act, and the Boss Bill - we are setting in stone that we believe in women, their rights and abilities to make essential decisions for their bodies and their families. For the last two years, we have been facing major threats to women's rights, and we

have not taken them lying down. We are organizing. We are running for office. And we are making sure that the law reflects our values. Our country is founded on freedom and committed to human rights. Without reproductive freedom and reproductive rights, we have neither.”

Senator Neil Breslin said, “There is nothing more fundamental to women’s well-being than her ability to control her own reproductive health. This begins with making sure that her reproductive health care is both affordable and accessible. The passage of the Comprehensive Contraceptive Coverage Act and the Reproductive Health Act is a critical step in this effort.”

Senator John E. Brooks said, “I am fully supportive of the Reproductive Health Act which provides to women the rights they deserve to protect their reproductive health options, including choices related to contraception. I support the codification of Roe v. Wade in to NY State law, and it is long overdue.”

Senator David Carlucci said, “The stakes are high for our daughters, wives, and mothers. We must protect women’s reproductive health rights in New York because they are under attack by the federal government. By codifying Roe v. Wade, decriminalizing abortion, and ensuring a woman’s access to contraception, we are empowering women to make their own choices about their medical care and family planning.”

Senator Leroy Comrie said, “It is past time that we update state law to fully protect the right of women to make their own reproductive healthcare decisions safely, affordably, and without the fear of repercussion. From contraception coverage to abortion, New York State must go above and beyond in ensuring that resources are available and clearly defined legal protections are in place so that women are empowered to make decisions when it comes to their own reproductive healthcare needs. Especially at a time when the future of these rights

are in jeopardy at the federal level, I am proud to support the Reproductive Health Act, the Comprehensive Contraception Coverage Act, and the Boss Bill.”

Senator Jim Gaughran said, “Today is one of many historic moments to come under the leadership of Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins. January 22nd, 2019 marks the day that New York tells women and girls -- you have the right to make health care decisions about your body. Thank you to Senator Krueger and all of the other advocates for your years of tireless advocacy on this important public health issue.”

Senator Andrew Gounardes said, “The Reproductive Healthcare Act, Comprehensive Contraception Coverage Act, and the Boss Bill are about protecting woman’s health care, her right to choose, and her economic security. A woman’s autonomy over her own body is a basic human right and a necessity in order to attain and preserve economic security in her life. Likewise, the ability for a woman to decide for herself when and if she becomes a mother depends on a continuum of reproductive health access. I’m incredibly proud to help pass these essential pieces of legislation that do what’s right and fulfill our promise to finally put people before politics.”

Senator Pete Harckham said, “Women have a right to safe and legal reproductive health choices, access to family planning services and protection from discrimination at work based on their family’s reproductive health decisions. These basic rights have been threatened in ways that we have not seen in generations. Now we are taking the necessary steps to protect women’s reproductive rights.”

Senator Brad Hoylman said, “Today, at long last, the New York State Senate affirmed that the only person who will control a woman’s health decisions is a woman herself— not the federal government, not an employer, and certainly not Donald Trump. As Trump and his crony colleagues in Washington continue to erode the constitutional protections under Roe

v. Wade, after today New York women can have confidence that safe and comprehensive reproductive care will be protected. I'm extremely grateful to Senate Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Senator Liz Krueger, Senator Jen Metzger, Senator Julia Salazar and my own Assemblymember Deborah Glick for their leadership on these historic bills."

Senator Robert Jackson said, "With the passing of these bills we give the power over women's reproductive choices back to women themselves. That power should never be criminalized, it should never be a bargaining chip for insurance companies, and it definitely should never be any of your employer's business. I'm proud of the bills we are going to pass today."

Senator Todd Kaminsky said, "With some much uncertainty and hostility in Washington, we must act now to ensure women's rights remain protected in New York. Today's package of legislation is a promise kept that our state will not will go backward and will remain a leader in protecting human rights for all."

Senator Anna M. Kaplan said, "A woman's decision to choose motherhood is deeply personal, and one that should be her right to make without interference by the government or her employer. Most New Yorker's would find it shocking to learn that family planning and abortion are still treated as crimes under New York Law, and that not all women are protected from retaliation by their employer just for choosing to access reproductive health care. I am proud to co-sponsor the Reproductive Health Act, which guarantees a woman's right to control her reproductive health regardless of potential changes in federal law, as well as the 'Boss Bill' and the Comprehensive Contraception Coverage Act, which tear down the barriers that still prevent women from freely accessing health services."

Senator Brian Kavanagh said, "So many New Yorkers have been waiting a long time for this moment, when both houses of the legislature will amend our state laws to respect the rights recognized by the U. S. Supreme Court nearly half a century ago. Taking this important step,

and expanding access to contraception and protections against workplace discrimination, will ensure that all New Yorkers can make their own reproductive health decisions.”

Senator Tim Kennedy said, “A woman's health care decisions should be made between her and her doctor. The Reproductive Health Act will ensure that, regardless of decisions being made in Washington, every woman in New York State maintains the right to make her own choices. I applaud Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins for ensuring this legislation made it to the Senate floor for a vote.”

Senator John Liu said, “At long last, state law will protect women's choice as a matter of health. There's still much to do but the RHA is an important step in equal rights for women and I've been proud to fight alongside tireless and tenacious advocates in the drive towards reproductive justice. Next up, pay equity!”

Senator Monica Martinez said, “I stand with women across my district and across all of New York to ensure that women have access to, and the explicit right to, the healthcare and the protections that they deserve.”

Senator Rachel May said, “It has been nearly five decades since New York updated its laws on women’s reproductive rights. Laws that once led the country in securing a woman’s right to control her economic and reproductive journey are now antiquated. It is long past time for us to codify a woman’s access to health care, especially when the U.S. Supreme Court appears to be increasingly hostile to such rights. On behalf of my daughter and all the women of New York, I am proud to co-sponsor the Reproductive Health Act. I also gladly voted for the Comprehensive Contraceptive Coverage Act, which will give women the resources they need to prevent unwanted pregnancies, and the Boss Bill, which will keep a woman’s healthcare decisions between her and her doctor, not her and her employer.”



Senator Shelley Mayer said, “I am grateful that the Reproductive Health Act (RHA), Comprehensive Contraception Coverage Act (CCCA), and the Boss Bill passed the legislature on this historic day. Women and families across New York State deserve the right and privacy protections to make their own reproductive healthcare decisions, which at times can be acutely difficult. With the threat of changes in federal law, it is critical that New York State protect and improve reproductive healthcare options and decision making. Together, these bills codify Roe v. Wade into New York State’s Public Health Law, ensure insurance coverage for FDA approved contraception, and protect employees from adverse consequences from employers as a result of their reproductive healthcare decisions. I look forward to working with my colleagues to further advance healthcare rights and options for women and families across the state.”

Senator Velmanette Montgomery said, “Access to healthcare plays a huge role in ensuring women have agency over their own bodies and this is especially true of reproductive health services. Women’s healthcare has been under attack all across the country and the current federal administration is threatening to undo decades of work on this issue. Access to healthcare services cannot be taken for granted. It is our responsibility as legislators to fight for and preserve these rights for the women of New York State so I am proud to stand with my colleagues to pass this reproductive health package.”

Senator Zellnor Myrie said, “With women’s reproductive rights under attack in Washington, it’s more important than ever that New York State pass legislation that protects our women and families. These bills will safeguard women's reproductive health and rights throughout our state and help ensure that no New Yorker will go without access to comprehensive family planning and care.”

Senator Kevin Parker said, “A woman’s right to control her body is a human and civil right. Once threatened, we embark upon a slippery slope to nowhere. That’s why I stand proudly

today with my colleagues in the Senate Democratic Majority Conference to not only protect Roe v. Wade, but to also ensure that women are not subject to restrictions or impediments when making choices about their reproductive health.”

Senator Roxanne J. Persaud said, “Today marks the 46th anniversary of Roe v. Wade; and today we pass the Reproductive Health Act, to secure a woman’s right to choose. I applaud my colleagues for pushing this bill and related legislation to expand access to healthcare for women and protect their choices.”

Senator Jessica Ramos said, “With the constant attack on our reproductive rights from this President's administration, it is more important than ever that the New York State legislature protect and defend women's rights. With the leadership of Majority Leader Andrea Stewart Cousins, New York State can provide women all the reproductive rights they have long waited for by passing the Reproductive Health Act, the Comprehensive Contraception Coverage Act, and the Boss Bill. I am proud to be one yes vote towards giving New York women full reproductive rights, contraceptive coverage, destigmatizing reproductive healthcare.”

Senator Gustavo Rivera, Chairman of the Senate Health Committee, said, “With the passage of the Reproductive Health Act, the Comprehensive Contraceptive Coverage Act, and the ‘Boss Bill’, we are finally honoring our State’s long-standing tradition of protecting women's reproductive rights and ensuring access to critical family planning. This important legislative package will go a long way to ending the struggle of women in New York by giving them full agency over the personal decisions they make over their reproductive health and medical care.”

Senator James Sanders Jr. said, “I am proud to co-sponsor this bill which will uphold Roe v. Wade and ensure that women continue to have the freedom to make choices regarding the

health of their bodies. This legislation will also provide that insurance companies cover contraceptives, which is important during these difficult economic times.”

Senator Diane Savino said, “It is long overdue that this body provide protections to women across this state and codify long-standing court precedent. I am thrilled that we finally have secured enough votes to pass the Reproductive Health Act. Today's package of legislation is yet another example of Leader Stewart- Cousins leadership to move this State legislature forward. I am proud to continue to support common-sense healthcare legislation.”

Senator Jose Serrano said, “As the federal government threatens to overturn Roe v. Wade, protecting a woman's right to reproductive health options is more important than ever. By updating an outdated, 50-year old law, we have ensured that women in New York will have access to the important health services and support they need, while standing up for the rights of working families to make personal health care decisions without facing discrimination.”

Senator Luis Sepúlveda said, “New York Democrats are ready to protect a woman's right to choose through state law to prevent the Trump administration's attacks on federal protections from harming women in our state. We will also ensure the right to access safe contraceptive care as a basic part of family planning. Along with these measures, our conference is prepared to pass legislation designed to protect women from retaliation at work for exercising their reproductive rights. As a proud advocate for women's rights, I fully support the Reproductive Health Act, the Comprehensive Contraception Coverage Act and the Boss Bill.”

Senator James Skoufis said, “It is my honor on the anniversary of Roe v. Wade, to vote yes to pass legislation that ensures every woman in this state is respected and guaranteed their fundamental right to control their own reproductive health.”

Senator Kevin Thomas said, “I am proud to stand with my colleagues, and pass the Reproductive Health Act, the Comprehensive Contraception Coverage Act, and the Boss Bill. With women's health and autonomy under constant threat from a Supreme Court with a radical agenda, taking steps to decriminalize choice is absolutely necessary. Today was a continuation of New York State's proud history as a trailblazer in women's rights, and I am proud to have taken part in delivering it.”

Robin Chappelle Golston, President & CEO of Planned Parenthood Empire State Acts, said, “We cannot overstate how important it is for New Yorkers to have the ability to control their own bodies and determine their own destinies. We applaud Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins and Assembly Speaker Carl E. Heastie for their leadership; the bill sponsors, Assemblymember Deborah Glick, Senator Liz Krueger, Assemblymember Kevin Cahill, Senator Julia Salazar, Assemblymember Ellen Jaffee, and Senator Jen Metzger for their dedication; and all the members for their commitment to the needs of New Yorkers and their vote today to keep health care in our hands. The legislature understands that with the continued threats on the federal level, New York must be a leader in protecting our access and not politicize reproductive health care. We look forward to continuing to work with the legislature and Governor Cuomo so that all New Yorkers have access to essential health care, now and in the future.”

Andrea Miller, President of the National Institute of Reproductive Health Action Fund, said, “Voters across New York this year delivered a clear mandate to the State Senate: they are ready for bold legislation that ensures every person is able to access abortion care and contraception. Today the Senate made that mandate a reality by taking decisive and swift action to pass the RHA, the CCCA and the Boss Bill — ensuring that no matter what happens in Washington DC, New York law protects and advances access to reproductive health care.”

Donna Lieberman, Executive Director of the New York Civil Liberties Union, said, “Today the New York legislature is poised to take a historic vote to protect women’s rights and autonomy. The Reproductive Health Act recognizes reproductive health care as a fundamental right. It takes abortion out of the criminal code and puts it where women's health belongs -- in the public health law. It recognizes the range of medical professionals that women can turn to, expanding access to early care. Together with the Comprehensive Contraception Coverage Act, this legislation will strengthen a woman's ability to decide what is right for her life, her body, and her family. As attacks on reproductive rights grow around the country, emboldened by the Trump administration’s efforts to stack the courts against women, updating New York's abortion law to protect the rights guaranteed by Roe v. Wade is more critical than ever. While there is still more to do to ensure New York can be a safe haven for women all over the country, today is a day for long-overdue celebration.”

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#### RELATED LEGISLATION

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### **2019-S240**

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- Introduced
  
- ○ In Committee Assembly
  - In Committee Senate
  
- ○ On Floor Calendar Assembly
  - On Floor Calendar Senate

- ○ Passed Assembly
  - Passed Senate
- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor
- 

Enacts the reproductive health act; repealer

January 02, 2019

Signed by Governor

Sponsored by [Liz Krueger](#)

Do you support this bill?

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## 2019-S660

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- Introduced
- ○ In Committee Assembly
  - In Committee Senate
- ○ On Floor Calendar Assembly
  - On Floor Calendar Senate

- ○ Passed Assembly
  - Passed Senate
- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor
- 

Relates to the prohibition of discrimination based on an individual's or a dependent's reproductive health decision making

January 07, 2019

Signed by Governor

Sponsored by [Jen Metzger](#)

Do you support this bill?

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## 2019-S659A

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- Introduced
- ○ In Committee Assembly
  - In Committee Senate
- ○ On Floor Calendar Assembly
  - On Floor Calendar Senate

- ○ Passed Assembly
  - Passed Senate
- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor
- 

Enacts the "comprehensive contraception coverage act"

January 07, 2019

Signed by Governor

Sponsored by [Julia Salazar](#)

Do you support this bill?