

# RESPECT WOMEN ACT

## RESPECT Women Act FACT SHEET

Deciding to start a family, delay becoming a parent or ending a pregnancy are some of the most personal decisions a woman could make. A woman should be able to make that decision without political interference.

Despite this, for the last six years, Wisconsin state legislators have passed laws that take information and options away from a woman and her family. These laws disregard medical science, the wellbeing of patients, and the patient-doctor relationship. This unprecedented political interference with patients' personal health care decisions undermines women's health in Wisconsin.

### Wisconsin women and their health care providers deserve better!

The **RESPECT Women Act** promotes a vision that a woman has the ability and support to make her own reproductive healthcare decisions free from harassment, intimidation, political interference, or false information. **That's something we can all believe in.**

Remove  
Barriers to Care

- **Goal #1:** Ensure Wisconsin women have access to comprehensive reproductive health by repealing existing abortion restrictions that are not grounded in medical science or widely accepted medical best practices.

Ensure  
Honesty in  
Health Care

- **Goal #2:** Ensure all patients receive honest, medically accurate information when seeking health care, by stopping the practice of politicians dictating what doctors have to say to their patients.

Promote Patient  
& Provider  
Safety

- **Goal #3:** Improve law enforcement training regarding effective response and prevention strategies to better address harassment, intimidation and violence that is sometimes directed towards patients and providers at reproductive healthcare facilities.

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**The RESPECT Women Act supports Wisconsin patients and healthcare professionals by:**

## **KEEPING POLITICIANS OUT OF THE EXAM ROOM**

**A woman, not politicians, knows what decision is best for her and her family.**

Most politicians aren't health care professionals and they don't have the medical education or training to legislate how health care professionals provide medical care. Unfortunately, that hasn't stopped a lot of Wisconsin politicians from inserting their personal politics into the private relationship patients have with their health care professionals. The RESPECT Women Act would repeal many of the politically-motivated and medically unnecessary restrictions on access to abortion that have been enacted in Wisconsin.

## **ENSURING MEDICALLY ACCURATE CARE**

**Patient care must be grounded in evidence-based, medically accurate science.**

When a woman seeks care, health care professionals provide their expert opinions based on their medical and scientific training. Politicians put women at risk when they force health care professionals to give their patients information that is not supported by medical science. The RESPECT Women Act ensures that when patients are making important decisions about their reproductive health, they can trust that their health care professional is able to provide them with information based on the best medical science available.

## **ENSURING PATIENT AND PROVIDER SAFETY**

**Patients deserve to be treated with dignity, which means healthcare should be free of harassment, intimidation and violence for themselves, their families, and their health care providers.**

Healthcare providers and patients continue to face harassment, intimidation, and even sometimes violence as they try to access, or provide essential healthcare. Patients and providers should not have to fear that they will be harassed, intimidated, or harmed when they try to access or provide care at reproductive healthcare facilities. The RESPECT Women Act will help address this issue by increasing the training law enforcement officers receive on prevention and response to harassment, intimidation, and violence against reproductive healthcare providers, facilities, and patients.

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## RESPECT Access to Care Bill: KEEPING POLITICIANS OUT OF THE EXAM ROOM

- The **RESPECT Access to Care bill** would ensure that a woman can obtain a safe and legal abortion, if and when she determines it is necessary.
- Wisconsin needs this legislation because our state lawmakers have followed a disturbing national trend of placing medically unnecessary restrictions on access to abortion that are not based in evidence or supported by the medical community.
- Since 2011, politicians have quietly passed 391 new laws against abortion in 33 states, including 7 in Wisconsin.
- These regulations only add to the many barriers to health care faced by many Wisconsin women, but especially women of color, those who live in rural areas, and women with lower incomes.
- As a response to some of new abortion regulations passed by states, the U.S. Supreme Court recently reaffirmed in the case of *Whole Woman's Health v. Hellerstedt* that women have a constitutional right to access a safe, legal abortion and any laws that burden that right must be grounded in evidence that that the law actually promotes a legitimate health benefit to patients.
- It is in the spirit of the *Whole Woman's Health* decision that this bill would also prohibit the state from implementing laws or regulations that place a burden on a woman's access to abortion if the law or regulation does not create a legitimate health benefit that either expands a woman's access to health care services or is proven by evidence-based research to increase patient safety.
- Finally, the bill would eliminate existing Wisconsin's laws that treat abortion differently than other medical procedures and that have no basis in medical science or widely accepted best medical practices.

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## RESPECT Medical Accuracy Bill: ENSURING MEDICALLY ACCURATE CARE

- In order to make well-informed medical decisions, patients need medically-accurate information. The concept of ***informed consent*** demands that a patient has all relevant, necessary information that is based on sound science regarding her or his health condition.
- Unfortunately, a patient's right to make well informed decisions about her health care has been under attack in Wisconsin, with the recent passage of laws that require doctors to provide medically inaccurate or unnecessary information to patients in regard to reproductive health care.
- Politicians should not interfere in patients' private medical decisions, force medical providers to lie to patients, or threaten the trusted patient-doctor relationship.
- The **RESPECT Medical Accuracy** bill would address these troubling trends by ensuring that medical decisions are left in the hands of patients and their health care professionals by creating a patient's right to receive medically accurate information so that they can make well-informed decisions about their health. The bill would accomplish this goal by doing the following:
  - Creates a right and obligation for a health care provider to provide medically accurate information to their patients.
  - Creates a right for a patient to receive medically accurate information from a health care provider.
  - Prohibits the state or employers from interfering with or diminishing the rights and obligations relating to medically accurate information.
  - Prohibits employment retribution based upon a health care provider's exercise of the rights and obligations relating to the provision of medically accurate information.

# RESPECT WOMEN ACT

## RESPECT Patient & Provider Safety Bill: ENSURING PATIENT AND PROVIDER SAFETY

- Healthcare providers and patients continue to face harassment, intimidation, and even sometimes violence at reproductive healthcare facilities. Patients and providers should not have to fear that they will be harassed, intimidated, or harmed when they try to access or provide care at reproductive healthcare facilities.
- Unfortunately, Wisconsin has not been immune from this type of behavior. Since 2011, there have been two separate convictions for arson and attempted murder directed at reproductive health care providers and facilities in our state.
- Law enforcement response to harassment, intimidation, and violence at reproductive healthcare facilities is an important factor in effectively addressing existing problems and also in deterring future violence. According to a 2014 survey of facilities that provide abortion, facilities that rated their local law enforcement as “good” or “excellent” were significantly less likely to experience violence and harassment than those who rated local law enforcement as “poor” or “fair.”
- Despite the harmful effects of these activities directed at reproductive healthcare providers, facilities, and patients, law enforcement often lacks the capacity, training, and resources to provide a comprehensive response that promotes the prevention and prosecution of such crimes.
- The **RESPECT Patient & Provider Safety** bill addresses these issues by:
  - Increasing the training law enforcement officers receive on prevention and response to harassment, intimidation, and violence against reproductive healthcare providers, facilities, and patients.
  - Providing grants to local law enforcement agencies affected by “anti-reproductive healthcare activities” and creates a state-level clearinghouse of resources regarding anti-reproductive healthcare activities in the state, best practices for prevention and procedures to address such activities, and existing state and local laws that can be used to combat them.
- Specialized training will permit law enforcement officers to not only better understand the challenges faced by reproductive healthcare providers and patients, but also learn to more effectively utilize existing Wisconsin laws to combat harassment, intimidation, and violence directed towards providers and patients. For example, Wisconsin has very strong criminal harassment and stalking laws that could be used to effectively address many of these types of activities.