

SENATOR ELIZABETH STEINER
STATE SENATOR



OREGON STATE SENATE
DISTRICT 17

Dear Secretary Brocker,

June 16, 2023

I'm writing today to explain my "yes" vote on House Bill 2002. As a Chief Sponsor of this critically important bill, it's important that I state clearly why I supported this bill vigorously.

Simply put, the **Reproductive Health and Access to Care Bill** will save lives. Minors having access to abortion services without needing to seek consent from an unsafe parent will save lives. Transgender people having access to affordable, medically appropriate gender-affirming care will save lives. Health care providers being able to practice without fear of repercussions to their careers from out-of-state anti-abortion and anti-trans politicians will save lives.

This was the first opportunity since the disastrous *Dobbs* decision for the Oregon Legislature to further codify the protections we had under *Roe v. Wade*, and we acted to keep our promise to Oregonians to protect their right to an abortion.

I would have been thrilled to vote in support of this bill -- which received bipartisan support in the House -- before its most recent amendment. However, the bill the Senate did approve on Thursday accomplishes most of the same goals Democrats sought to achieve coming into this session.

Oregon is a pro-choice state and Oregonians should be proud of House Bill 2002.

This is a frightening time in this nation for access to reproductive health care. Bans are being implemented in many states. Entire clinics and maternity wards in Idaho are shutting down because anti-choice politicians are forcing their views onto everyone. Often these views are drawn from a particular religious tradition. But what is often overlooked in these national conversations is that many religious traditions, including my own, believe having access to full scope reproductive health care is critical. Religious freedom, as guaranteed by our First Amendment, requires that each person be able to practice their religion without hindrance from the government.

Additionally, transgender and nonbinary Oregonians deserve access to full-scope gender-affirming health care. Our nation is becoming a dangerous place for many who just want to live their lives in a way that is as true to themselves as possible. To reduce the significant mental health challenges and the disproportionately high suicide rate among transgender and nonbinary Oregonians they must know that our legislature supports them in living their authentic lives.

As a family physician and a State Senator, I am committed to protecting the right of every Oregonian to choose the reproductive and gender-affirming health care that best fits their circumstances. By doing so, we save lives and protect religious freedom. Oregon must remain a beacon of hope and House Bill 2002 helps us accomplish that goal.

Respectfully submitted,

Senator Elizabeth Steiner MD