Speaker Rayfield,

In June 2022, the U.S. Supreme Court issued a ruling in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* to overturn the federal constitutional right to abortion. The ruling unraveled 50 years of precedent and opened the floodgates for states to criminalize abortion, as well as put other fundamental rights at risk. Experts expect that soon more than half of states will be hostile to abortion access. Recent data shows there are now 22 million women of reproductive age who have virtually no abortion option in their state. Furthermore, US Senator Lindsey Graham in September introduced legislation to create a federal ban on abortion.

These bans hurt real people who should have the freedom to make their own decisions. People, not politicians, should have the right to make their own decisions, including when it comes to abortion care. But many Americans are facing a reality in which people will face jail time for seeking an abortion, along with the doctors, nurses and other providers who provide that care.

Overturning *Roe v. Wade* worsened the public health crisis around abortion. The race to criminalize access to health care will deepen health inequities and create generational consequences. We anticipate the ruling to overturn *Roe* will create a domino effect, emboldening those who wish to restrict access to birth control and other critical forms of health care. Banning abortion is part of a wider effort to control individuals' bodies and lives. State lawmakers across the U.S. have also introduced a record-breaking number of anti-LGBTQ bills, including actions to prevent access to lifesaving health care for Oregonians.

Even before the *Dobbs* decision, there were many barriers for individuals to access reproductive health care services. Overturning *Roe v. Wade* means the number of people facing obstacles to get the essential health care they need will skyrocket. It means that Black, Latino and Indigenous people, immigrants, people living with low incomes, trans and non-binary people, and people in rural areas — communities who have long faced barriers to abortion access — will face greater challenges.

Thanks to decades of advocacy and legislative action, Oregonians have the right to an abortion without government interference. Oregonians have protected this right time and again at the ballot. And yet, despite Oregon's nationally recognized leadership in protecting the right to health care, barriers to accessing care still exist. Whether it's having to travel over 300 miles across the state to find a provider, fighting with your insurer about if they cover required services, or hostility faced while walking into a health center. Leadership at all levels of the government is needed now more than ever to protect access to care.

At your request, community and advocacy organizations, providers, clinic administrators, and issue experts came together over the last few months to form the Reproductive Health and Access to Care (RHAC) workgroup. Our goal was to identify how Oregon can protect, strengthen, and expand equitable access to reproductive health care and other services that have been under attack at the state and federal levels. Personal medical decisions must be protected from government interference.

The workgroup broke into three subcommittees that met over six weeks to form recommendations to ensure access to the rights granted under Oregon law. These subcommittees included patient experience and access to care, clinic infrastructure and workforce, and a legal protections subcommittee.

We want to thank the workgroup participants who spent numerous hours with us and shared their expertise. The workgroup has submitted initial recommendations that we will review and finalize in the coming weeks. To keep you updated on the workgroup's progress, the following summary outlines our recommendations for a blueprint for how the Legislature and executive branch can take steps to protect and ensure access to health care in Oregon. We look forward to submitting a full report to your office in the near future.

- Invest in patient education and outreach to counter inaccurate and misleading information
- Close gaps in Oregon insurance coverage to ensure all communities have better access to care
- Make abortion and other reproductive health services more accessible by increasing providers and facilities in medically underserved regions of the state and enhancing network adequacy standards
- Ensure the sustainability of care through adequate reimbursement rates for all reproductive health services
- Build up the health care workforce and expand opportunities for continued learning
- Protect individuals located in Oregon from criminal and civil liability for receiving, supporting, or providing reproductive care and other life-saving services
- Prevent interference with health care clinics and providers to protect the safety and security of providers and patients
- Support compliance with existing sexuality education laws and standards
- Protect the privacy of individuals who receive, support, or provide reproductive and gender-affirming care
- Expand the Reproductive Health Equity Act to include a fundamental right to contraception and reproductive health services

Respectfully,
The RHAC Planning Team