Shweta Krishnan

Op-Ed Assignment

March 29, 2024

**Abortion access must be legalized and equally accessible to everyone now.**

By: **Judy Chu**- Judy Chu is a U.S. Representative for California’s 28th congressional district. She serves on the subcommittee for health on the Ways and Means Committee, the Pro-Choice Caucus, and chairs its Contraception and Family Planning Task Force. She introduced the Women’s Health Protection Act (WHPA), which would give healthcare providers the ability to provide abortion care to patients without restrictions.

Unsafe abortions are one of the leading, but preventable, causes of maternal deaths and morbidities. They can lead to physical and mental health complications for women and healthcare providers. According to the [World Health Organization (WHO),](https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/abortion) 8-11% of annual maternal deaths can be attributed to unsafe abortions globally.

Banning abortions will not end these procedures. They will continue to be carried out in an unsafe manner. The [John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health](https://publichealth.jhu.edu/2023/a-year-without-roe) reports that pregnancy-related complications are 2 to more than 25 times higher for pregnancies ending in birth compared to abortion. Physical health risks associated with unsafe abortion also include incomplete abortion, hemorrhage, infection, uterine perforation, and damage to the genital tract and internal organs.

Additionally, abortion bans and restrictions are emphasized in marginalized and vulnerable communities. For example, according to the [Center for Disease Control and Prevention](https://www.cdc.gov/healthequity/features/maternal-mortality/index.html#:~:text=Racial%20Disparities%20Exist,structural%20racism%2C%20and%20implicit%20bias.), Black women are three times as likely to die in childbirth as their white counterparts. Abortion bans will harm individuals’ health by reducing access to other necessary healthcare services offered by the restricted providers, such as contraceptive services, testing, and treatment for sexually transmitted infections, LGBTQ+ health services, referrals for primary care, intimate partner violence prevention, prenatal care, and adoptions services. Most importantly, abortion restrictions especially affect people with low incomes, people of color, immigrants, young people, individuals with disabilities, and medically underserved areas because these populations already experience health disparities due to social, political, and environmental inequities.

In order to decrease maternal mortality rates due to unsafe abortions, legislative action must be taken. The Women’s Health Protection Act (WHPA) would prohibit governmental restrictions on the provision of, and access to, abortion services. It establishes a statutory right for health care professionals to provide abortion care and resources and for patients to receive care, free from bans and restrictions. This legislation was introduced in June 2021, and has been passed by the House of Representatives. It is still yet to be passed by the Senate before it can be signed into law. It has been taken into consideration for several months, but no other specific legislative action has been taken to help decrease maternal mortality rates and help women make informed decisions about their own reproductive health. Congress must be driven by a strong commitment to helping women’s healthcare and work in a bipartisan manner to counter this issue.

It is crucial to give women the choice to make the healthcare decisions that are best for them by giving them legal access to all possible abortion resources. The Women’s Health Protection Act is a major piece of legislation that could change the scope of abortion access and help more women. It's time to give women the healthcare they need and deserve.