



U.S. SENATOR MARIA CANTWELL

WASHINGTON

# SNAPSHOT: Abortion Care in the State of Washington One Year Post *Dobbs*

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One year ago, on June 24, 2022, the Supreme Court issued its ruling in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* overturning the longstanding precedent of *Roe v. Wade*. Although the Court's earlier decision had protected the right to an abortion for nearly a half century, and although Washington state has long protected the right to an abortion, health care providers and patients in the state began to see negative consequences of the *Dobbs* decision almost immediately. For example, within just a month of the Court's decision, Washington abortion clinics reported seeing more Idaho-based patients. Doctors in Washington state described increased fear of being prosecuted for doing their jobs. And providers saw a massive increase in patients seeking long-term contraception -- at UW Medicine, they saw a tenfold increase in sterilization requests in the months after *Dobbs*. This document provides an overview of negative effects felt in Washington state in the year since the *Dobbs* decision, data about its impact on Planned Parenthood clinics in Central and Eastern Washington, and a summary of legislative action Senator Maria Cantwell has taken in response to the *Dobbs* decision to protect abortion access and choice for women across the country.

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## **Idaho Abortion Ban Floods Washington With New Patients**

Though the *Dobbs* decision did not immediately make abortion illegal in Idaho, Washington-based providers saw an increase of patients from that state almost immediately.

In July 2022, Planned Parenthood's Pullman clinic [reported](#) seeing an increase in Idaho-based patients, from 62% in June to 78% in July.

On August 25, 2022, Idaho's abortion ban went into effect.

By December, clinics in Washington state were seeing effects, and [reported](#) performing 10% more abortions in December 2022 than they did in May 2022.

Patients were not just coming from Idaho. In April 2023, Dr. Mollie Nisen, a Washington state family physician and abortion provider, [reported](#) seeing patients for medication abortions from seven different states in one day. "People coming from as far as a seven-hour plane ride to get a five-minute procedure is what we're looking at right now," Nisen said.

Recent data that Planned Parenthood of Greater Washington and North Idaho shared with Senator Cantwell's office shows the impact from out-of-state patients on Planned Parenthood's 11 Central and Eastern Washington clinics -- especially patients from Idaho -- during the first full calendar year after the *Dobbs* decision.

- Total abortion patients: **Up 18%** from January-May 2022 to January-May 2023
- Total abortion patients from out-of-state: **Up 36%** from January-May 2022 to January-May 2023
- Total abortion patients from Idaho: **Up 56%** from January-May 2022 to January-May 2023

Certain clinics have seen exponential increases in out-of-state abortion patients.

Planned Parenthood's Kennewick clinic saw two Idaho abortion patients from January-May 2022; they have seen 91 from January-May 2023. Likewise, the organization's Walla Walla clinic, which saw one Idaho abortion patient from January-May 2022, saw 20 such patients from January-May 2023.

Doctors at UW Medicine say they have noticed differences in when patients are coming to see them since the *Dobbs* decision. "We have seen an increase in the gestational ages at which patients need abortion procedures," says Dr. Sarah Prager, a Professor and Clinician at UW Medicine's Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, and Director of the Family Planning Division. "This is usually due to increased barriers in getting care, especially if coming from another state."

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### **Decision Creates Chilling Effect on Washington State Doctors, Patients**

In the immediate aftermath of the *Dobbs* decision, both doctors and patients displayed uncertainty about what the decision meant for them. At a July 2022 press conference hosted by Sen. Cantwell, Dr. Barbara A. Goff, Chair of Obstetrics and Gynecology at UW Medicine, [said](#) that OB/GYNs in Washington state were concerned about the potential of criminal punishment and vigilante attacks.

These concerns were not unfounded. In April 2023, Idaho [passed](#) a law that would make it a crime -- punishable by 2-5 years in prison -- for adults to help a minor get an abortion across state lines or get abortion pills without parental consent.

In the months after the decision, UW Medicine doctors also saw a tenfold increase in the number of people requesting sterilization procedures, and an increase in the number of people wanting to have long-acting contraception such as IUDs and implants removed and replaced, to make sure they have highly effective contraception in place for as long as possible.

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### **Increases in Abortion Patients at Central and Eastern Washington Planned Parenthood Clinics**

Data provided by Planned Parenthood of Greater Washington and North Idaho shows an overall increase in total abortion patients, abortion patients from Idaho, and all abortion patients from out-of-state.

<b>All Abortion Patients, Jan.-May</b>			
	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>% Increase</b>
Ellensburg	12	28	<b>133%</b>
Kennewick	485	575	<b>19%</b>
Moses Lake	4	33	<b>725%</b>
Pasco	3	34	<b>1,033%</b>
Pullman	83	106	<b>28%</b>
Spokane	493	574	<b>16%</b>
Spokane Valley	182	180	<b>-1%</b>
Sunnyside	1	23	<b>2,200%</b>
Walla Walla	43	47	<b>9%</b>
Wenatchee	62	70	<b>13%</b>
Yakima	388	409	<b>5%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1756</b>	<b>2079</b>	<b>18%</b>

Source: Planned Parenthood of Greater Washington and North Idaho

<b>Abortion Patients from Idaho, Jan.-May</b>			
	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>Increase</b>
Ellensburg	0	0	<b>N/A</b>

Kennewick	2	91	<b>4,450%</b>
Moses Lake	0	0	<b>N/A</b>
Pasco	0	0	<b>N/A</b>
Pullman	49	50	<b>2%</b>
Spokane	79	88	<b>11%</b>
Spokane Valley	59	44	<b>-25%</b>
Sunnyside	0	0	<b>N/A</b>
Walla Walla	1	20	<b>1,900%</b>
Wenatchee	0	0	<b>N/A</b>
Yakima	3	8	<b>167%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>56%</b>

Source: Planned Parenthood of Greater Washington and North Idaho

<b>All Out-of-State Abortion Patients, Jan.-May</b>			
	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>Increase</b>
Ellensburg	0	0	<b>N/A</b>
Kennewick	76	159	<b>109%</b>
Moses Lake	0	0	<b>N/A</b>
Pasco	0	0	<b>N/A</b>
Pullman	49	51	<b>4%</b>
Spokane	83	97	<b>17%</b>
Spokane Valley	61	46	<b>-25%</b>
Sunnyside	0	0	<b>N/A</b>
Walla Walla	10	27	<b>170%</b>
Wenatchee	0	0	<b>N/A</b>
Yakima	14	18	<b>29%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>293</b>	<b>398</b>	<b>36%</b>

Source: Planned Parenthood of Greater Washington and North Idaho

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### **Bills Cosponsored by Sen. Cantwell**

Since a draft of what became the *Dobbs* decision was leaked in 2022, indicating that the Supreme Court intended to overturn the reproductive health care precedent established by *Roe*

*v. Wade*, Senator Cantwell has been focused on identifying legislative solutions to protect abortion access and choice for women across the country. Bills Senator Cantwell has introduced or cosponsored include the following:

- **Women's Health Protection Act:** Would [protect](#) the right to abortion nationwide.
- **EACH Act:** Would [allow](#) federal funding for abortion services, including for WA's Medicaid, Medicare, and TRICARE patients.
- **Let Doctors Provide Reproductive Health Care Act:** Would that doctors won't face prosecution in other states for performing legal abortions in WA.
- **Protecting Service Members and Military Families' Access to Health Care Act:** Would [help](#) military enlistees access abortion no matter what state they're stationed in by granting them access to administrative leave and travel and transportation allowances.
- **My Body, My Data Act:** Would [help](#) keep digital reproductive data private, preventing harassment or abuse of pregnant people or the use of the data to initiate litigation.
- **Affordability is Access Act:** Would [require](#) health plans to cover all FDA-approved over the counter contraception.
- **Right to Contraception Act:** Would [codify](#) the right to use contraception into law, effectively preserving the Supreme Court's longstanding ruling in *Griswold v. Connecticut*. While this precedent is even older than *Roe*, Justice Clarence Thomas's alarming concurring opinion in *Dobbs* urged the Court to "reconsider" its substantive due process precedents, including *Griswold*.
- **Freedom to Travel for Health Care Act:** Would [ensure](#) people who cross state lines to get an abortion can't be prosecuted in their home state for doing so.