

**U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell**  
**Dobbs Anniversary Press Conference**

**June 24, 2024**

**Sen. Cantwell Opening Remarks**

**[VIDEO]**

Good morning. I'm Maria Cantwell, and I'm so honored to be here with Dr. Harrington, Jacqueline, Grayson, Em, and the many people here who provide great access to reproductive care at Harborview and many of our institutions in the Washington area.

I just want to thank them for their incredible work, and thank you for what you have added to this discussion on the second anniversary of the Dobbs decision. We are hearing tragic stories about the impacts to human lives during these unbelievable bans and chilling effects that we're seeing across the United States.

This snapshot is making something very clear; just because the State of Washington protects an abortion right, it doesn't mean that we're immune from the impacts of the Dobbs decision.

Our snapshot shows that people are being impacted because they have to leave their states. They have to leave because the adequate health care is not there, and their rights as citizens of the United States are not being protected.

Decisions made by one state about an issue as critical and personal as women's reproductive health care and the right to seek an abortion is challenging us everywhere in the United States of America.

Washington, we've decided here that abortion should be legal in our state, but leaving that up to states means that places like Idaho hospitals, as we have heard, aren't allowed to give life saving care to patients, and those who are experiencing complications, as we heard about, are then having to airlift here into Washington. In fact, one Idaho physician told us about once a week, a woman facing complications is airlifted from Idaho across the border.

Leaving it up to states means that some women have to travel across the country, sometimes to multiple states, to get the care they need. And we've heard that leaving up to the states means that the chilling effect is affecting women who have been raped, who want emergency contraception, they just want the plan B pill to stop an unwanted pregnancy because they have been raped, and hospitals are now saying they won't give them access to that contraception, emergency care.

Leaving abortion up to states means that we are seeing OB/GYNs move out of those states, and those unprecedented rates of movement of physicians out of those states are delivering us healthcare deserts.

Those healthcare deserts will affect all of us eventually. In Idaho, at least 50 OB/GYNs have left the state since the abortion ban went into effect, and leaving that up to those states means without enough OB/GYN care, women will lose out on access to reproductive care, something that may actually help them keep a pregnancy, if they just got the right care. But without the number of OB/GYNs to deliver that care, it puts them at higher risk.

We definitely don't want to see the continuation of our rights being eroded and basic reproductive care being challenged everywhere. When it comes to abortion, the impact isn't just limited to the states next door.

According to our snapshot report, Planned Parenthood said that in Western Washington, we have seen patients from 22 different states in just the first half of this year in 2024. We've had to step up and be the maternal emergency provider for pregnant women from Idaho and around the country, and as we heard today, this presents some challenges.

Our doctors and nurses and advocates who are here today are really heroes. I thank you for that. They have welcomed these patients from fleeing states with open arms and providing essential care, and the access to reproductive care shouldn't be based on where you live, and a doctor's ability to deliver that care should not be based on where they practice.

We know that with that 20 plus percent of OB/GYNs leaving Idaho, that this is just no way to practice medicine. That is why we're fighting in Washington to change these laws to make sure that the Women's Health Protection Act, which would codify *Roe v. Wade* and access to abortion nationwide, has been high on our list in seeking votes in legislation. The Freedom to Travel for Health Care Act, which would stop anti-choice states from criminalizing travel for abortion care. The Let Doctors Provide Reproductive Health Care Act, which would stop anti choice states from trying to imprison abortion providers in pro-choice states, and the Keep Obstetrics Local Act, which I just recently supported with Senator Wyden, increases the Medicaid payments to those rural counties who are practicing in underserved areas, so we can try to keep some of that reproductive health still going in those areas.

But our colleagues on the other side of the aisle and MAGA Republicans have blocked those protections at every step of the way, and that is why, as I said, we need to codify *Roe v. Wade*.

But as you can see, our colleagues aren't stopping at just stamping on our rights to abortion care. Just this past month, we tried to codify just the access to contraception, and again, they voted against that. We tried to make sure that protecting IVF and other assisted reproductive services, but our colleagues said no.

So I am so grateful for the providers that are here today. You are doing remarkable work. Thank you for that. I hope that we can continue this fight and advocacy, that we will take this information that we see here in Washington and around the country and realize that we are stepping on the human rights, the health care rights, and the privacy rights of Americans that are affecting their families at a time when they deserve to have full reproductive care.

I thank the advocacies here, and Washington, we're going to keep doing our part in the other Washington. We're not going to stop until we get these laws passed. Thank you.