

## Our Progress

The 2023 state legislative session was historic for abortion rights. After the fall of *Roe v. Wade* in June 2022, it was critical to pass as many pro-abortion rights and gender-affirming care bills as possible to ensure Washington state can be a sanctuary state. And we did it!

**We passed five bills** that protect Washington patients and providers who face legal threats from other states; strengthen health data privacy; eliminate out-of-pocket costs for abortion care; protect access to medication abortion; and protect providers' licenses.

Washington is leading the nation in passing bold and comprehensive legislation around bodily autonomy.

This year, we also held our first in-person Advocacy Day since 2020! We hosted an incredible day: 57 lawmaker meetings, five bill hearings for our priority legislation where multiple of our activists testified, a Reproductive Freedom rally with 100 attendees and ten elected officials speaking on the importance of these bills.

Our activists kept up the pressure throughout the session providing personal testimony at bill hearings, publishing letter to editors on our priorities, and reaching out to their lawmakers to ensure they prioritized pro-abortion rights and gender-affirming care legislation.

# 2023 Post-Session Update

## Priority Legislation

### Keep Our Care Act (SB 5241, HB 1263)

Large, corporate health systems are absorbing smaller community-based health care systems. Unchecked mergers drive up prices and restrict access to critical health care services, including abortion, gender-affirming care and end-of-life care.

The Keep Our Care Act (KOCA) would ensure that mergers and acquisitions of health care systems improve rather than harm access to affordable, quality care. It would also give the Attorney General oversight and enforcement power to ensure that health entity consolidations do not negatively impact access to care.

### Current Status: **STALLED**

KOCA did not get voted out of the Senate by the chamber of origin cut-off deadline.

However, this is a multi-year campaign, and the community's sustained engagement has resulted in increased public awareness and media attention. We'll continue to work on KOCA in the 2024 legislative session to ensure everyone can access comprehensive health care in their community.

- In its third year, KOCA made it to the Senate Rules Committee, one step away from a full chamber vote in the Senate.
- KOCA received two hearings where patients, providers, and activists voiced their support for this bill in front of lawmakers, including five activists from the Pro-Choice Washington network.
- The bill received broad media coverage including a [Seattle Times feature article](#) and a podcast by [KUOW Seattle Now](#).
- Four Pro-Choice Washington activists had Letters to the Editor (LTEs) published by:
  - [Seattle Times \(union member\)](#)
  - [Seattle Times \(health care provider\)](#)
  - [Bellingham Herald \(student activist\)](#)
  - [Columbia Gorge News \(community member\)](#)
- Finally, throughout the session, we had eight activists attend their lawmaker's town hall to ask questions and urge them to take action on this bill.



## Shield Law (SB 5489, HB 1469)

**What it does:** This law will strengthen legal protections for abortion providers, patients, and helpers in Washington state by preventing local entities from cooperating with out of state investigations. This bill will shield patients and providers from being criminalized for providing or accessing abortion or gender-affirming care in Washington state.

**Its impact:** Washington is the sixth state to pass a shield law in the United States. Shield laws have become increasingly more important in the past year, as more hostile states have passed laws that are designed to outlaw abortion and gender-affirming care. 14 states have passed laws banning gender-affirming care for youth and eighteen states have passed full or partial bans on abortion. By passing this law, we are making it clear that Washington is a state where people can receive the healthcare they need, free from criminalization.

**Current Status:** PASSED

## Washington My Health, My Data Act (SB 5351, HB 1155)

**What it does:** The Washington My Health, My Data Act will protect people's personal health information by preventing it from being shared without their consent, including by fake clinics known as Crisis Pregnancy Centers (CPCs) or with law enforcement in states that criminalize abortion and gender-affirming care.

**Its impact:** For years, Washington advocates have been trying to pass a comprehensive data privacy bill in Washington in the absence of a comprehensive policy at the federal level. The passage of the My Health, My Data Act is a major victory for not only Washington state but the entire country. It provides Washingtonians and those who travel here for services the right to decide who shares and sells their sensitive health data, and the ability to demand corporations to delete their health data.

**Current Status:** PASSED

## Ending Cost-Sharing for Abortion Care (SB 5242, HB 1115)

**What it does:** This law requires Washington insurance companies to cover 100% of the costs for abortion care services starting in 2024.

**Its impact:** Abortion is an expensive medical procedure. It can cost up to \$750 in the first trimester. Nobody should have their care delayed or denied because of cost. This law makes abortion care more accessible and equitable for Washington residents.

**Current Status:** PASSED

## Protecting Provider Licenses (SB 5400, HB 1340)

**What it does:** This bill will ensure that provider licenses are protected from negative action for services that are legally protected even when criminalized in other states.

**Its impact:** As other states are passing laws to punish health care providers for providing abortion and gender-affirming care, Washington is passing laws to protect them. It is critical that medical providers can feel confident in providing essential healthcare to all patients, regardless of where they are coming from, without fear of losing their medical licenses.

**Current Status:** PASSED

## Protecting Access to Medication Abortion (SB 5768, HB 1849)

**What it does:** This law authorizes the Department of Corrections to acquire, deliver, distribute, and dispense abortion medications.

**Its impact:** Medication abortion now accounts for more than half of U.S. abortions. With mifepristone's future in jeopardy, Washington officials acted quickly to secure a three-year supply for the state with the intention that Washington could distribute this critical medication, regardless of federal action.

**Current Status:** PASSED



## Securing Critical Funding for Clinics and Providers

**What it does:** Over \$15 million for the 2023–25 biennium is provided to support abortion care.

**Its impact:** The budget invests in the state's reproductive healthcare infrastructure and ensures we can continue providing abortion and gender-affirming care to those who need it. This includes funds to abortion clinics, investments in reproductive care workforce, and grants to protect providers.

**Current Status:** **BUDGET REQUESTS APPROVED**

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## Support Legislation

### Police Accountability

The Washington Coalition for Police Accountability came to the legislature with a commonsense agenda to reduce police violence and increase accountability through reduced traffic stops, appointing an independent prosecutor, and giving survivors of police violence a private right of action (HB 1025, HB 1445, HB 1513, and HB 1579).

While none of these bills passed this session, the coalition will continue to organize to increase police accountability in 2024. The lack of action on police accountability this session is disappointing. We need to continue speaking out to tell lawmakers loud and clear that it is time to hold police agencies accountable.

### Progressive Revenue

The [Balance Our Tax Code Coalition](#) is celebrating the Supreme Court's decision to uphold the Capital Gains Tax, and the \$500 million of yearly funding for much needed childcare, early learning, and education. This session, the coalition also developed and endorsed bills that would generate essential funding for communities and address racist economic policies Washington. (continued)

While some progress was made, the coalition is disappointed the legislature did not do more to advance important policies.

- A Wealth Tax, a proposal that would have raised more than \$3 billion per year to fund disability services, affordable housing, education, and cash for working families, was not considered in the final budget.
- The legislature made important changes to help communities access the **Working Families Tax Credit** but excluded working seniors and young workers without children.
- Legislators voted to continue funding for a guaranteed basic income pilot program in Tacoma but failed to expand it.

### Health Equity for Immigrants

The [Health Equity](#) for Immigrants Campaign advocated for affordable health care and coverage for all Washingtonians, prioritizing equitable access for individuals uninsured and underinsured due to immigration status restrictions. The final budget includes:

- \$110M to continue funding for the Exchange's Cascade Care Savings program, some of which will be available to undocumented immigrants under 250% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) starting January 2024.
- \$49.5M for a new Medicaid-like program for undocumented immigrants under 138% FPL starting July 2024.

While the creation of this program is exciting, these funding levels are insufficient. Tens of thousands of people in Washington will still be unable to access health coverage. This campaign will continue to advocate for additional funding for these programs in future years.

- \$7.7M in new funds to increase the limited number of low-income immigrants eligible for long-term care support.
- \$3.7M in new funds to support outreach, customer assistance, and administration for the new programs.

