

REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE/HEALTH TASK FORCE REPORT

UULMNJ ANNUAL MEETING

APRIL 16, 2016

The task force has been operational as the Health Task Force and then the Health/Reproductive Justice Task Force for many years and has done excellent work. The task force changed leadership in July 2015. Since that time the following has been the focus:

Advocacy

- In July 2015 when Planned Parenthood was under attack by a discredited group who released heavily edited videos alleging illegal activity, the task force responded with a statement condemning the attacks. The statement refocused on issues that women face in obtaining appropriate health care and on the core issues of the reproductive justice movement - the right to have children, to not have children and to parent children in safe and healthy environments. To quote that statement, "The aforementioned framework) is a basic human right and at the core of reproductive justice. This right is grounded in the particular experiences, values, priorities and leadership of women of color. As Monica Simpson of SisterSong, a national reproductive justice collective said recently, "The simple fact is that the people who are out there perpetuating myths about abortion providers are not doing so because they care about ensuring the availability of high quality health services. This is about doing whatever it takes, including spreading lies in order to make it so that women can't get an abortion when they need one."
- Responded to the shooting at a Planned Parenthood clinic in Colorado with a letter writing campaign in support of the clinic staff. At least 2 congregations sent individual letters signed by congregants.

My Health My Life Coalition

- New coalition of organizations in NJ supporting reproductive health care and founded by Planned Parenthood Action Fund of NJ. The task force is an active member of this coalition
- Interfaith Council also founded by PPACNJ and attended by Craig Hirshberg. Colette Parsons will serve as back up to Craig .
- **Restoration of family planning funds:**
 - Kate Clark of the NJ Family Planning League was helpful in our understanding of the issues around family planning funds at Oct. 17 2015 meeting.
 - MHML Coalition led by PPAF is making the restoration of funds for family planning its priority. This task force will respond to requests for advocating when the bill is moving forward. The good news is that there is a chance that there will be enough votes for an override of the Governor's veto this time. There will be an emphasis on the lack of basic reproductive health care including increase in number of STD cases since the removal of funds.

Roe v Wade 43rd anniversary events organized by members of the My Health My Life Coalition and others

- Co-Signed the Op-Ed that was written by NJ Abortion Access Fund. While not picked up by conventional media outlets, it was widely distributed by social media.
- Co-sponsored the “Living in the Crosshairs: The Untold Stories of Abortion Terrorism luncheon organized by the National Council of Jewish Women, Essex County Unit.
- Task Force members participated in Roe event s sponsored by the My Health My Life Coalition in Princeton and Montclair.

NJ Legislation

- Restoration of family planning funds. Working with My Health My Life Coalition.
- Monitoring legislation introduced in the 2016 session. Bill introduced during each session that have been introduced in the past that would restrict abortion access. There is minimal chance of getting a committee hearing.
- Roe Resolution - Rev. Hirshberg and Carol Loscalzo spoke at the press conference in the NJ State Legislature on March 14 in support of the Joint Resolution supporting a woman's right to decide her own reproductive choices and commemorating the 43rd anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court decision in Roe v. Wade. The resolution passed the Senate and did not come up for a vote in the Assembly due to resolutions not being concurrent. Word “celebrate” vs “commemorate” at issue.
- Supported the Vitale Bill (S221) prohibiting restraint of inmates during childbirth . Passed both houses and vetoed by Governor.
- Task force has begun to consider asking a legislator to sponsor legislation that would allow abortion clinic doctors and staff to keep their home addresses private.

Intersection with criminal justice reform

- Monitored the communication from the UULMNJ Ending the New Jim Crow Task Force and supporting the legislation that is relevant to reproductive justice.

Other – National

- Signed onto the UUWomen's Federation faith based Amicus Brief before the Supreme Court - Whole Women's Health Vs. Hellerstedt. Task Force was represented at the demonstration on March 2 by Laurice Grae-Hauck.
- Monitored Targeted Regulation of Abortion Providers (TRAP) laws around the nation for potential impact and issues in NJ. Due to the increased activity around these laws, the NJ bills mentioned above become even more crucial to watch.

Carol A. Loscalzo, Reproductive Justice/Health Task Force chair