

# City of Alexandria, Virginia

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## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** NOVEMBER 22, 2022

**TO:** THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** COUNCILMAN R. KIRK McPIKE & VICE MAYOR AMY JACKSON

**SUBJECT:** FURTHER STEPS TO PROTECT ACCESS TO REPRODUCTIVE CHOICE AND RELATED SERVICES IN ALEXANDRIA

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After the meeting in June at which the Council passed the resolution supporting continued access to reproductive health services in the City in the wake of the *Dobbs v. Jackson* decision by the Supreme Court, we attended a public meeting of the Alexandria Commission for Women.

At that meeting, the Commission presented various ideas for what the the City could do to support access to reproductive health services in the City, provide clear information to the public on the availability of such services and promote the availability of that information, address organizations that provide misleading information about reproductive choice, and improve the availability of emergency and long-acting reversible contraception.

According to feedback to these suggestions provided by the City Attorney, the ability of the City to take meaningful steps on these issues is in some cases constrained by Virginia law, the Dillon Rule, and Federal case law.

Further, should abortion be made illegal in Virginia by an action of the General Assembly, there is nothing the City could do to counteract that. However, many of the suggestions from the Commission were workable under current law, and we believe that we should act upon them.

Considering the Commission's recommendations and the City Attorney's advice, we recommend that the City Council instruct the City Manager to take the following actions:

1. Work with the Office of Communications and Public Information to:
  - a. Create a dedicated page on the City's website that provides accurate and clear information regarding how to access both reproductive health services in the city

and financial support, including any financial support programs established by the City.

- b. Include on this page information about the availability of emergency contraception, including “Plan B” contraception as made available under Item 3 below, and long-acting, reversible contraception in the City, and programs to make such contraception tools affordable to low-income Alexandrians.
  - c. Coordinate with women’s reproductive health service providers in the City to ensure that the information provided about them is done so in a manner that addresses any safety or security concerns they may have.
  - d. Consult with a search engine optimization firm to ensure, to the greatest degree possible, that this page will appear at the top of search engine queries regarding these issues in the City.
  - e. Publicize the existence of this page on other City website pages that deal with health matters, on the City’s social media accounts, and in other venues considered appropriate by the OCPI Director.
2. Work with the women’s health providers in the City who offer services involving the termination of a pregnancy to ensure that their safety and security needs are as thoroughly addressed as possible, within the limits of existing Federal case law.
  3. Work with the Alexandria Health Department to ensure that over the counter emergency contraception is readily available without an appointment at all Health Department locations in the City, and to determine what the Teen Wellness Center would require to improve access to long-acting, reversible contraception. Further, work with the Health Department to consider how the city could partner with pharmacies with evening and weekend hours to ensure access to “Plan B” at times when the Health Department is closed.
  4. Identify funding during the FY 2024 budget process to ensure access to emergency contraception, long-acting, reversible contraception (LARC), and reproductive health services in Alexandria, with a focus on low-income Alexandrians and Alexandrians without access to primary healthcare.

These actions would address the main areas raised by the Commission for Women and represent concrete efforts on the part of the City to protect the right of all Alexandrians to reproductive choice.

Further, we agree with the Commission's suggestion that once the website page in item 1 is published the Mayor should send a letter on behalf of the City Council to Google and other internet search engine companies. In this letter, the City should ask them to be mindful of the danger of misinformation regarding reproductive health services and request that they prevent websites hosted by anti-reproductive choice organizations from appearing above the City's website page when users search for information about such services in Alexandria.

cc: Jim Parajon, City Manager  
Joanna Anderson, City Attorney