



**WRITTEN STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD BEFORE THE U.S. SENATE
COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET**

**“NO RIGHTS TO SPEAK OF: THE ECONOMIC HARMS OF RESTRICTING
REPRODUCTIVE FREEDOM”**

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John Arensmeyer

Founder & CEO, Small Business Majority

Dear Chairman Whitehouse, Ranking Member Grassley and members of the Senate Committee on the Budget:

As a leading representative of America’s 33 million small businesses, Small Business Majority is pleased to provide written testimony to the U.S. Senate Committee on the Budget regarding the recent hearing on the economic harms of restricting reproductive freedom.

Small Business Majority is a national small business organization that empowers America's diverse entrepreneurs to build a thriving and equitable economy. From our nine offices across the country, we engage our network of more than 85,000 small businesses and 1,500 business and community organizations to deliver resources to entrepreneurs and advocate for public policy solutions that promote inclusive small business growth. Our work is bolstered by extensive research and deep connections with the small business community that enables us to educate stakeholders about keys issues impacting America’s entrepreneurs, with a special focus on the smallest businesses and those facing systemic inequities.

Examining the intersection of reproductive rights and women's entrepreneurship

Women's reproductive freedom has been under attack for decades, with the Supreme Court's decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade* nearly two years creating a cascade of restrictions on reproductive healthcare. This infringement not only impacts a woman’s right to choose, but also hinders the financial stability of women entrepreneurs nationwide. For women entrepreneurs, regardless of their race, ethnicity, or party affiliation, the freedom to decide if and when to have children is extremely important to their ability to pursue economic opportunity through starting or growing their own businesses.

Women-owned small businesses continue to be the driving force of the post-pandemic economy, and the current small business boom has demonstrated that women filed new business licenses at astonishing rates.¹ From 2019 to 2023, the growth rate of women-owned small businesses far outpaced the growth of those owned by men by 94%.² Out of the nation’s 33 million small businesses, women-owned businesses represent more than 12 million businesses, which includes over 40% (11.2 million) of the nation’s non-

¹ “Statement from President Joe Biden on record-setting small business applications.” The White House. January 11, 2024. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2024/01/11/statement-from-president-joe-biden-on-record-setting-small-business-applications-2/>.

² “New business applications reach record 16 million under Biden-Harris Administration.” U.S. Small Business Administration. January 11, 2024. <https://www.sba.gov/article/2024/01/11/new-business-applications-reach-record-16-million-under-biden-harris-administration>.

employer firms and around 22% (1.3 million) of the nation’s employer firms, who employ more than 10 million employees.^{3, 4}

Given the fact that women own nearly 40% of the nation’s small businesses and represent the fastest growing demographic of entrepreneurs, it is essential that we protect reproductive rights to ensure women entrepreneurs and their employees can continue to thrive and operate in safe environments that offer access to quality and convenient reproductive healthcare. Simply put, reproductive freedom and protections are good for business and restricting those freedoms also restricts economic growth.

Our research shows that protecting and promoting the reproductive rights of families and women is paramount to fostering a thriving economy

While women’s entrepreneurship rates continue to skyrocket, women entrepreneurs are growing increasingly concerned about their reproductive freedoms and how efforts to restrict those freedoms will come to harm not only their business, but their employees’ wellbeing.

In a recent Small Business Majority survey of more than 500 women small business owners nationwide, an overwhelming majority (92%) of respondents believe it is important for women to have the freedom to decide if and when to have children.⁵ This statement holds true across party lines, with 99% of Democrats, 96% of Independents and 84% of Republicans also believing this is important.⁶ Financial security and the ability to plan one’s future is an absolute necessity for small business success, and women entrepreneurs see a clear link between reproductive health access and economic freedom.

While having children can be a driving reason as to why women pursue entrepreneurship, nearly two-thirds of women small business owners (64%) say their ability to decide if and when to have children has allowed them to advance in their careers and start their own businesses.⁷ Nearly 6 in 10 women small business owners (57%) believe that restrictions on abortion access will force women to choose between their careers or their reproductive freedom, with only 29% who think restrictions will have no impact on a woman’s career and business.⁸

Furthermore, access to quality benefits such as healthcare, childcare, and abortion care play an important role in women entrepreneurs’ ability to attain financial security. More than half of women small business owners polled found every benefit listed just as important, with health insurance coverage (93%) garnering the most support.⁹ In addition, childcare (89%), birth control (77%) and paid family leave (83%) are also very important to most women entrepreneurs, while a majority (57%) view abortion care as an important benefit to attaining financial security.¹⁰

Lastly, following the June 2022 Supreme Court ruling overturning *Roe v. Wade*, 78% of women entrepreneurs surveyed expressed concerns over state efforts to restrict not only abortion, but access to contraceptives.¹¹ In states where reproductive rights are being threatened or restricted, about 10% more

³ “Census Bureau releases nonemployer business data by demographic characteristics of owners.” U.S. Census Bureau. February 8, 2024. <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2024/nonemployer-business-data.html>.

⁴ “Census Bureau releases new data on minority-owned, veteran-owned and women-owned businesses.” U.S. Census Bureau. October 26, 2023. <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2023/annual-business-survey-employer-business-characteristics.html>.

⁵ “Women entrepreneurs see access to reproductive health as essential to their economic security.” Small Business Majority. June 14, 2023. <https://smallbusinessmajority.org/our-research/women-entrepreneurs-say-reproductive-health-essential-to-economic-security>.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

business owners said their revenues were declining, rather than improving.¹² Additionally, those surveyed agree that it is important for their employees to have access to reproductive healthcare (71% agree/52% strongly agree), while roughly a quarter say that the Court ruling has had a negative impact on them, their families and their employees.¹³ As noted previously, these restrictions impact not only the business owner, but also women employees who may have to take unpaid time off work to travel across state lines to access the reproductive services they need. The evidence following the reversal of *Roe v. Wade* is clear: Disenfranchising women of their right to autonomy over personal reproductive care decisions is accompanied by far-reaching negative economic implications.

Women entrepreneurs support policies and national efforts to expand and protect reproductive freedoms

Reproductive restrictions are already impacting where people are willing to live and work. For small businesses operating in states with restrictions in place, many challenges exist for women employees and employers alike. That is why policies and national efforts to expand and protect reproductive freedoms are essential to not only the health of women nationwide, but the health of our national and state economies. Policies to expand access to reproductive healthcare at the federal and state level are welcomed by a large majority of women entrepreneurs, giving them a sense of security in their community and the ability to provide a safe working environment for their employees.

Our research has found that while women entrepreneurs value several reproductive healthcare policies, ensuring and expanding access to birth control is the most popular issue among women small business owners. What's more, surveyed women entrepreneurs strongly favored having the right to receive abortion care under federal law (72% support) and ensuring and expanding access to abortion care (70% support).¹⁴ The expansion of reproductive healthcare policies is an issue that is supported across party lines, with Democrats strongly supporting each policy issue and 86% of Republicans surveyed supporting expanded access to birth control.¹⁵ Additionally, more than 50% of Republican women surveyed support the right to receive abortion care under federal law and expanded access to abortion care.¹⁶

Congress must protect reproductive freedom to promote a thriving economy

Women entrepreneurs and women-owned small businesses are key contributors to the national economy, employing more than 10 million employees nationwide and generating \$2.7 trillion annually.¹⁷ However, restrictive policies that have followed the Supreme Court's overturning of *Roe v. Wade* have threatened women entrepreneurs' financial stability nationwide. Our research points to not only the importance of a woman's right to choose if and when to have children in terms of their career goals, but the expansive support for policies to expand access to reproductive healthcare services including the right to abortion care and access to birth control under federal law.

To ensure the financial stability and economic wellbeing of the millions of women entrepreneurs that keep our economy thriving, we urge Congress to protect reproductive rights at the federal level and implement common-sense policies that will expand and strengthen access to reproductive healthcare for millions of women employers and employees nationwide. It is essential that Congress act to protect the reproductive rights of women as they continue to pursue entrepreneurship and start new businesses, which contribute to the overall health and resilience of our economy.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ "The economic impact of women-owned businesses." *Forbes*. October 30, 2023.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/rhettbuttle/2023/10/30/the-economic-impact-of-women-owned-businesses/?sh=15d9ef6c7dcf>.

We appreciate the Senate Committee on the Budget for holding this important hearing and shedding light on the economic harms of restricting reproductive freedom. For any questions or additional information, please contact our Government Affairs Director, Alexis D'Amato, at adamato@smallbusinessmajority.org.

Sincerely,

John Arensmeyer
Founder & CEO
Small Business Majority