



NARAL Pro-Choice Texas

Houston Candidate Questionnaire On Reproductive Rights



## **Raj Salhotra**

Candidate for City Council At-Large Position 1

Website: [www.rajforhouston.com](http://www.rajforhouston.com)

### **Legality of Abortion**

**I believe abortion is part of comprehensive reproductive health care and support the right to choose abortion as fundamental to each person's autonomy.**

Agree

**I support the enshrinement of the fundamental right to abortion in law and oppose legislation that makes abortion and other reproductive health services harder to access.**

Agree

### **Policies That Affect Access to Abortion**

**Insurance coverage for abortion services, including government-provided health insurance, Medicaid, Medicare, etc.**

Support

**Laws that prevent local governments and jurisdictions from providing funding for abortion services to indigent residents**

Oppose

**State law that requires doctors to provide information unsupported by medical and scientific evidence, such as the claim included in the "Women's Right to Know" Act that asserts that abortion increases the risk of breast cancer**

Oppose We need to focus on the real science as opposed to claims that have no merit in evidence.



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**State law that that imposes a medically unnecessary 24-hour waiting period on abortion patients, necessitating at least two separate visits to the same provider**

Oppose

**Policies that require pregnant minors to obtain parental consent or seek a judicial bypass in order to receive an abortion**

Oppose

Comments: We know that some minors may have difficulty accessing abortion services because of these barriers.

**Policies, including local clinic safety ordinances, that protect patients, doctors, and other health care professionals at reproductive health clinics from violence, harassment, threats, and intimidation**

Support

**Proposals ensuring that “crisis pregnancy centers” (CPCs, fake women’s health clinics, of which there are more than 10 in Houston) do not mislead or intimidate people facing unintended pregnancy by misrepresenting themselves as sources of unbiased health information, and local ordinances that limit false advertising and other deceptive practices of CPCs**

Support

**Non-coercive, comprehensive access to the full range of reproductive health care, including abortion, for incarcerated people**

Support

**Local funding for organizations that provide logistical assistance, doula services, and other wrap-around support for people seeking abortion care**

Support

**Policies That Support Access to Comprehensive Reproductive Health Care and Support Healthy Communities**



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**State law that prevents local government from partnering with abortion providers or their affiliates (such as, but not only, Planned Parenthood) for services like sexual health education, family planning initiatives and STI prevention**

Oppose

**Proposals that allow certain individuals or corporations (such as HMOs, pharmacists, and health insurance companies) to refuse to provide specific reproductive health services, information, or referrals, including under claim of "religious liberty"**

Oppose

**Emergency contraception (EC) should be accessible to all people – including ER patients and people who seek services because of rape or sexual assault. (EC is an FDA-approved contraceptive, taken after sex, which greatly reduces the likelihood of pregnancy. EC is not abortion and cannot harm a pregnancy if one is already established.)**

Agree

**All Houston workers should have a living wage of at least \$15 per hour.**

Agree

**All employers, including the City of Houston, should provide paid family and medical leave so that people aren't forced to make a choice between earning an income and caring for themselves and their families.**

Agree

**Pregnant individuals should be able to work, be protected from discrimination, and be provided with any reasonable accommodations they need.**

Agree

**The City of Houston should protect its employees, public housing residents, and HHA voucher recipients from discrimination based on gender identity and reproductive decisions.**

Agree

**The City of Houston has a role to play in helping school districts provide age-appropriate and medically accurate sexual health education that is not limited to teaching only abstinence.**



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Agree

Comments: We must ensure that all students are receiving this information, and our Council Members should advocate for this.

**Undocumented people should be able to access reproductive health care without fear of being reported or shamed. The City of Houston should implement programs to help undocumented residents feel safe when seeking these services, such as municipal identification and cultural competency and “Know Your Rights” trainings for healthcare providers and clinic staff.**

Agree

**Municipal courts should abolish cash bail such that people do not face pre-trial incarceration — and, therefore, the risk of losing their homes, jobs, and ability to care for their families — for being too poor to post bond.**

Agree

## **Getting to Know the Candidate and How They View Reproductive Freedom**

**Please describe your stance on access to reproductive health care, including family planning, contraception, and access to abortion.**

I believe that access to vital healthcare services such as reproductive health care is essential and therefore we should not create obstacles to accessing these services. I believe we need to increase access to reproductive healthcare so individuals can get the healthcare they need; those seeking reproductive health care should be able to get all of their needs met without restriction.

**Where does it fall on your list of priorities?**

The health of Houstonians is of utmost importance to me. I will fight for every Houstonian's access to healthcare and their right to choose.

**Do you see a connection between reproductive rights and other issues, such as racial, economic, and migrant justice?**

Yes, there is a connection between reproductive rights and other issues. For example, black women have the highest abortion rate, meaning that cutting access to reproductive services disproportionately affects them more than their white counterparts. Moreover, we



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also know that folks of color and lower income folks have higher rates of maternal mortality. I believe that one's racial, economic, or migrant background should not impact their ability to receive healthcare, especially in a city as diverse as Houston. Therefore, we should do everything in our power to expand access.

**How will that impact your service if elected to office? Do you intend to proactively seek out opportunities to champion action for reproductive rights, including by drafting and sponsoring creative items to increase gender equity and access to reproductive health for all Houston residents?**

As a city council member, I will use my platform to support reproductive rights. I am open to any opportunity to champion reproductive rights and health and will work with organizations such as NARAL Pro-Choice Texas and Planned Parenthood to create legislation for the benefit of reproductive health.

**How do you feel about preemption of local government on progressive issues? Specifically, are you willing to champion, support, and vote for legislation that may ultimately be preempted if you feel it's the right thing to do, including on issues of abortion access? Will you, subsequent to passage of progressive legislation, work to stop potential preemption, including actively opposing state legislative overreach and providing resources to defend city laws in court?**

I believe that Houstonians should govern Houston, not politicians in Austin. I will work for issues I believe to be in the best interests of Houstonians, including opposing legislative overreach. I will also advocate in Austin to ensure that we can oppose and repeal any local preemption laws.

**Tell us about a time when you stood up for reproductive rights and gender equity. Have you ever been publicly outspoken about your values in supporting access to abortion? Have you ever had conversation with colleagues, coworkers or other community members, published an opinion piece in the paper, attended a public event in support of reproductive rights, etc?**

Quite frankly, I have not published an opinion piece or publicly been outspoken about reproductive rights; however, I have attended Planned Parenthood events and recently visited with the Planned Parenthood office in Houston and learned more about the issue and how best I can advocate for the issue.

As a teacher, I had high school students who accessed Planned Parenthood's services, and I supported them and advocated for them to do so.