



NARAL Pro-Choice Texas

Houston Candidate Questionnaire On Reproductive Rights



Sylvester Turner
Mayor (incumbent)

Website: <https://sylvesterturner.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

Comments: Health insurance should not discriminate against women.

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

Oppose

Comments: Criminalizing health care is a dangerous public policy.

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



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Oppose

Comments: Republican legislators should stay out of women's health care.

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

Comments: Republican legislators should stay out of women's health care.

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

Oppose

Comments: I appreciate the argument that parents should be involved in the health care decisions of their children. But these laws are not created to help parents. They are created to advance a political agenda that is harmful to women.

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

Comments: We work with law enforcement to keep clinics and their staffs safe.

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

Comments: I am not aware that the city has jurisdiction here. But I am willing to learn more.

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

Support

Comments: Incarcerated people deserve access to quality health care.



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

Support

Comments: I support but only in principle. We face an ongoing funding crisis in the city and I do not want to make promises I cannot keep.

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

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

Comments: Republican legislators should not be interfering in women's health care.

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

Comments: Republican legislators should not be interfering in women's health care.

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

Comments: I support this in principle, but we must acknowledge the obstacles, from state law prohibitions on cities setting minimum wages to the city's severe budget constraints. That said, we are making progress at the city. We've gotten to \$12/hour with janitors and



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security guards and are on a path to \$15/hour. We are engaged in discussions with United Airlines and other contractors to find a path to \$15 for all workers.

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

Comments: I support paid sick leave. Regulating private businesses in this way, however, would be a big step for the City of Houston. I am open to a voter initiative on this issue.

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

Agree

Comments: Of course, and my understanding is that this is the law. Please let me know if I am mistaken.

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

Comments: I am opposed to all forms of discrimination.

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.

Disagree

Comments: I agree that school districts should provide this education, but I do not know what the city's jurisdiction would be here.

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



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Comments: Undocumented people should be allowed access to all health care, including reproductive health care. I support municipal ID cards, but was asked by immigration advocates to hold off, out of a concern that ICE would be able to access the database.

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

Comments: If I interpret your question correctly, I agree that municipal courts should find alternatives to incarceration for those too poor to post bond.

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 support access to reproductive health care in all these instances.

Where does it fall on your list of priorities?

This is a high priority.

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

Yes. People facing discrimination in the areas you identify are often least able to access reproductive health care (or any health care, for that matter).

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?

Yes. We have worked at the city to support reproductive rights and health, even in the face of a hostile state and federal government.

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



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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 am opposed to state preemption of local government actions. In my view, our current state government has become hostile to local control for political reasons, not legitimate policy reasons.

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?

My answer would span my entire career as an elected official. The El Paso Times described Turner as a "lion of pro-abortion rights." I have consistently fought state efforts to restrict abortion, including the state bill to ban cities from entering into legal contracts with Planned Parenthood and other private organizations that provide abortion services. With respect to gender equity, I was a strong supporter of the HERO ordinance in 2015, helping then Mayor Annise Parker to win support among conservative clergy. My support for a HERO ordinance has not wavered.