

The EQUIP Act

Sponsored by Congresswoman Suzanne Bonamici (OR-01)

Empower women to make informed care decisions that improve health outcomes

Endorsed by: *Power to Decide, March of Dimes, 1,000 Days, R Street Institute, Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs, What to Expect Project, American Nurses Association, American College of Nurse-Midwives, National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health, The International Association of Forensic Nurses, The Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses*

Women in the United States still experience disturbing levels of poor birth outcomes including low child birth weight, infant and maternal mortality, and other health disparities.¹ Nearly half of pregnancies in the United States each year are reported as unintended, one of the highest rates in the world among developed countries.² **Unintended pregnancies often result in adverse maternal and child health outcomes**, including delayed pre-pregnancy care, premature births, and low birth weights. Improving outcomes and reducing the rate of unintended pregnancy are significant national public health issues.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other medical experts call for counseling women on both their contraceptive and pre-pregnancy health needs.³ However, many women are not receiving the most appropriate form of reproductive health care at any given time, whether to improve pre-pregnancy health if intending to become pregnant or using the most suitable form of birth control if seeking to prevent pregnancy.⁴ Pregnancy intention screening initiatives make sure that women are having important, patient-centered conversations with their health providers about their own goals regarding pregnancy and receiving the most appropriate care—whether pre-pregnancy, contraceptive, or other follow-up care.

The Enhancing Questions to Understand Intentions for Pregnancy (EQUIP) Act establishes a **pregnancy intention screening demonstration grant** at the CDC. This would facilitate the adoption of evidence-based initiatives that allow health care and social service providers to **routinely screen women about their pregnancy desires** to either **prevent unintended pregnancies** or **improve the likelihood of healthy pregnancies**. The legislation would also evaluate the implementation and outcomes of such protocols among a diverse group of patients and providers.

One such initiative, called [One Key Question](https://powertodecide.org/one-key-question)® makes sure that women of reproductive age are asked “Would you like to become pregnant in the next year?” during each health care visit. The answer leads to provider-patient discussions that keep women healthier, help eliminate health disparities, and save taxpayer dollars.⁵ This promising model is now being implemented at sites in more than 30 states with Power to Decide providing training and technical assistance to support growing interest nationwide.⁶

The **EQUIP Act** will advance these pregnancy intention screening initiatives to help providers have important reproductive health conversations with their patients.

¹ <https://www.marchofdimes.org/materials/March-of-Dimes-2016-Databook.pdf>

² <https://www.guttmacher.org/fact-sheet/unintended-pregnancy-united-states>

³ <https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/contraception/qfp.htm>

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ http://hsrc.himmelfarb.gwu.edu/sphhs_policy_facpubs/814/

⁶ <https://powertodecide.org/one-key-question>

EQUIP Act summary:

Section 1 – **Title:** The Enhancing Questions to Understand Intentions for Pregnancy Act

Section 2 – **Pregnancy Intention Screening initiative demonstration grant program**

- (a) **Program Establishment** – Creates a CDC demonstration program to facilitate the adoption of pregnancy intention screening initiatives
- (b) **Grants** – May be used to implement pregnancy intention screening initiatives, collect data, and conduct evaluation of the demonstration program
- (c) **Eligible entities** – Specifies a broad range of providers and settings eligible to receive grants, given they provide non-directive, comprehensive, medically accurate information
- (d) **Definition** of “pregnancy intention screening initiative”
- (e) **Evaluation** – Requires CDC to:
 - (1) Evaluate demonstration, including the following considerations:
 - (A) Protocol implementation
 - (B) Outcome measures
 - (C) Population health disparities
 - (D) Minority and medically underserved communities
 - (E) Training, capacity, and technical assistance needs of providers
 - (F) Referral systems and follow-up care
 - (G) Effect on key health outcomes
 - (2) Consult with a wide range of experts and providers during the evaluation
 - (3) Report findings to Congress and the public
- (f) **Funding** – Authorizes \$10 million per year over three years, with a maximum of 20% spent on evaluation