

Benefits of Offering Medication Abortion at Massachusetts' Public Universities

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Public university students in Massachusetts experience significant—and unnecessary—barriers to accessing medication abortion, an [extremely safe practice](#) that is a top choice for many abortion seekers. Implementing H. 3841 would reduce these barriers to care while enhancing gender and racial equity as well as economic justice on campus.

WHY DO COLLEGE STUDENTS NEED BETTER ACCESS TO ABORTION?

Unintended pregnancy and abortion rates are highest among college-aged students. Research from the American Association of Community Colleges and the National Association of Education Statistics indicates that access to abortion can help students stay engaged with and complete their programs.



Abortion healthcare access is also important for the **25%** of students who experience sexual assault that may result in pregnancy while in college. But public universities in Massachusetts do not provide medication abortion, so students are forced to find off-campus providers.

HOW MANY UMASS AND MA STATE STUDENTS SEEK ABORTION EACH YEAR?

50 to 115 of MA public university students obtain medication abortion services each month.*

This translates to **600 to 1,380** per year

*From my research with Julia Mathis

CAN'T STUDENTS TRAVEL OFF CAMPUS TO OBTAIN ABORTION?

Travel can be time consuming and costly for college students. To reach MA providers, students must travel between **2 and 42 miles**, with a population-weighted average distance of **19 miles**. Travel time on public transportation to reach the nearest abortion-providing facility takes between **18 and 400 minutes**, with a population-weighted average of **103 minutes nearly 2 hours, one-way**.



103 minutes on public transportation



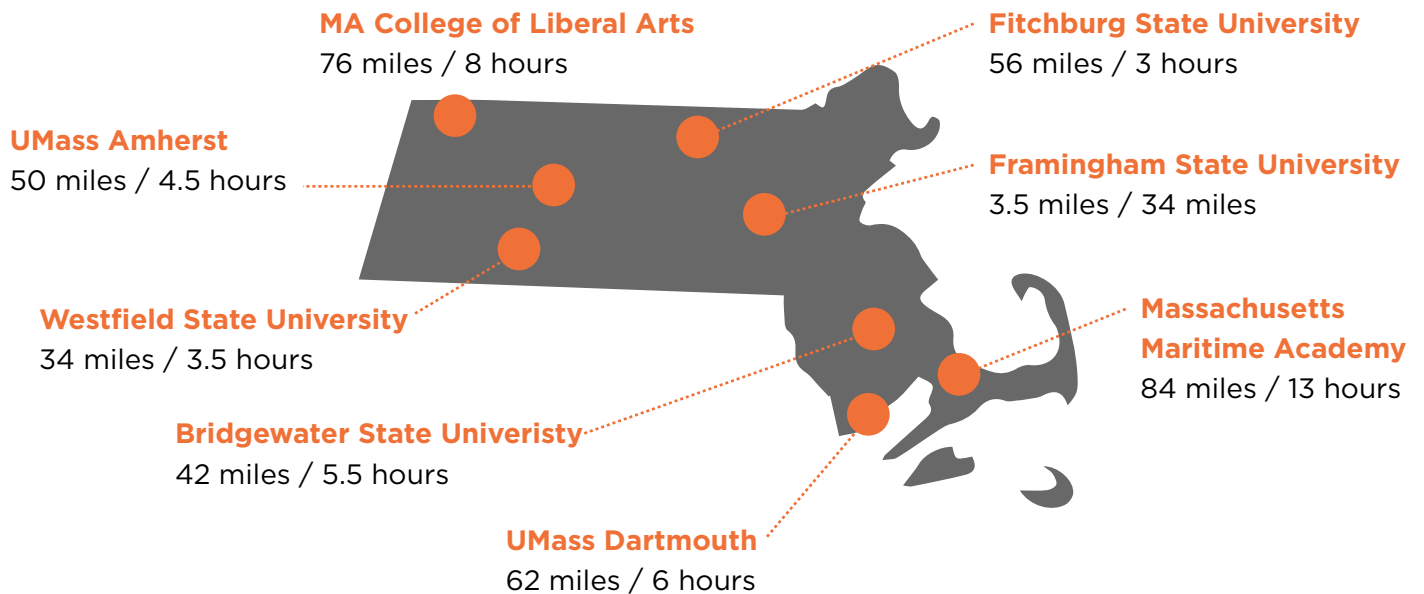
19 miles: The average distance students must travel for abortion services



21%
of students at U. Mass Amherst own cars

Only **21% of students at the largest University of Massachusetts campus in Amherst own cars**, yet the nearest abortion facility—Planned Parenthood of Western Massachusetts—is **25 miles away** and takes 2 hours and 18 minutes one way to reach by public transportation. Traveling to the abortion provider, obtaining the needed healthcare, and traveling home by bus takes many hours—time students may not have to spare between classes, jobs and other activities. Eight of the 13 nearest abortion-providing facilities to campus are not open on weekends, so students may have to miss classes or work shifts to travel on weekdays.

PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN ABORTION CARE DESERTS: ROUND TRIP DISTANCES VIA PUBLIC TRANSIT TO THE NEAREST ABORTION CLINICS



IS MEDICATION ABORTION AFFORDABLE?

Not particularly—and low-income students bear the brunt. While many facilities accept a range of insurance plans, students may be burdened by having to negotiate insurance coverage for this service, and they may face high deductibles or co-pays.



\$680

The average cost of medication abortion at Massachusetts clinics

CAN STUDENTS GET AN OFF-CAMPUS APPOINTMENT QUICKLY?

The logistics of going off campus may delay access to medication abortion, extending the duration of negative symptoms of early pregnancy and potentially pushing students past the 10-week limit for obtaining medication abortion and forcing them to obtain a more invasive, more expensive aspiration abortion procedure.



8 days

The average wait time to the first available appointment

HOW DOES H. 3841 ENHANCE GENDER AND RACIAL EQUITY WHILE FURTHERING ECONOMIC JUSTICE?

Burdens on obtaining abortion affect everyone looking to end a pregnancy, but these logistical and financial hurdles have an increased impact on historically excluded groups. Because lower-income students are disproportionately people of color, all of the above barriers to timely care may fall harder on those individuals. Low-income students with work and family responsibilities that place demands on their time and finances may find obtaining off-campus healthcare particularly burdensome. And for the one in four students who experience sexual assault during college, abortion access on college campuses could serve as an important resource for recovery from the assault.