

## Position Statement: Reproductive Health Policies in Tennessee

### **Adopted April 2023**

The League of Women Voters supports the right of all citizens to make their own reproductive choices and believes that reproductive choice is not only a critical issue affecting the rights of women and all who may become pregnant, but one of racial and economic justice. Overturning reproductive rights disproportionately harms low-income people and people of color, who are most impacted by systemic inequalities.

On June 24, 2022, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*, a landmark decision in place for nearly 50 years that balanced the reproductive rights of women with the right of a viable fetus to be born. The Court's decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* ruled that reproductive choices in early stages of pregnancy no longer belong to all women living in the United States but are now the purview of state legislatures.

### **Recommendations:**

#### **Restore Reproductive Health Care Access**

- Decriminalize the provision of abortion in Tennessee. Legitimize medically necessary interventions to terminate pregnancy in order to protect the life and health of pregnant persons, including in cases of child sexual abuse, rape, incest, or severe fetal abnormalities.
- Allow the medical necessity of pregnancy interventions to be determined by licensed medical professionals in consultation with their patients, not by the legislature or the courts.
- Include mental health as a legitimate consideration in determining morbidity or mortality risk in females seeking to terminate their pregnancy or requiring emergency pregnancy interventions.
- Require TennCare and private health insurance to cover the cost of pregnancy terminations to protect the life and health of pregnant persons, including victims of rape, incest, or child sexual abuse.

#### **Expand Access to Comprehensive Reproductive Health Services**

- Reform the state Medicaid program to cover low-income, nondisabled adults currently ineligible for coverage through TennCare and unable to afford private health insurance.
- Increase state investment in equitable access to comprehensive reproductive health services throughout Tennessee: Support rural hospitals; recruit providers of primary care, mental-behavioral health care, and obstetrical care in medically underserved areas; and expand financial and social support services during pregnancy and early parenting.
- Enhance support for county and regional health departments to maintain and expand current reproductive health services.
- Ensure the TN Department of Education's Lifetime Wellness standards are met in all grades. Include Quality Sexual Health Education as described by the Centers for Disease Control as the evidence-based way to provide critical skills needed to decrease sexual risk behaviors among Tennessee youth.