



Charleston, WV

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**Statement of West Virginians for Affordable Health Care
On the
U.S. Supreme Court Ruling in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*
June 24, 2022**

Today's U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* ends the Constitutional right to an abortion, a right recognized in the landmark *Roe v. Wade* decision in 1973. In the case, *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, the Supreme Court heard Mississippi's appeal of a lower court ruling that struck down as unconstitutional the state's law banning abortion after 15 weeks of pregnancy.

Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization marks the first time the Court has ruled on the constitutionality of a pre-viability abortion ban since *Roe*. The Court held: "The Constitution does not confer a right to abortion; *Roe* and *Casey* are overruled; and the authority to regulate abortion is returned to the people and their elected representatives." Going forward, states will have unfettered authority to limit or completely ban abortion access for women and their families.

"Today's Supreme Court ruling is a travesty for women's health and well-being. West Virginia women and their doctors should be able to weigh all the personal and medical circumstances and decide what is best for their health, their families, and their future. Every woman should have the right to control her own body and her future. The Supreme Court decision undermines that fundamental right," stated Dr. Jessie Ice, Executive Director, West Virginians for Affordable Health Care.

"Pregnancy can be physically and emotionally dangerous for many women. Although the United States spends more on healthcare than any other country in the world, more than two women die during childbirth every day, the highest rate compared to developed countries. Another 50,000

women each year have unexpected outcomes of labor and delivery with serious short- or long- term health consequences,” stated Kat Stoll, Policy Director, West Virginians for Affordable Health Care.

Ms. Stoll added, “The Supreme Court decision in Dobbs narrows the fundamental constitutional right to privacy and therefore has frightening implications that go beyond abortion access. The opinion also puts contraceptives, including the abortion pill, at risk of being restricted by state legislatures.”

West Virginians for Affordable Health Care Board Chair Sharon Carte called for the state legislature to respond, “Our state legislature should enshrine the right to a full array of reproductive health services for West Virginia families. And they should move quickly to repeal the draconian abortion statute in WV Code 61-2-8. It is not the role of legislators to interfere in this most personal decision by criminalizing abortion and driving maternity providers out of our state.”

West Virginia has significant abortion restrictions in place, including a 20-week ban, a 24-hour waiting period, parental notification requirements, bans on using state Medicaid dollars to fund abortions, and bans on telemedicine administration of abortion medication. These restrictions already make abortion difficult to access, especially for lower income women.

The Supreme Court ruling disproportionately impacts women who already face significant barriers to accessing reproductive health services, including women of color, low-income individuals, and those who live in rural areas. Experts estimate that pregnancy-related deaths among women of all races and ethnicities could rise 21 percent or more in West Virginia and other states if abortion is made illegal or criminalized.

Ms. Carte continued, “West Virginians for Affordable Health Care calls on our nation and West Virginia to guarantee access to abortion and all reproductive health services. Further, we call on our nation and West Virginia to address gaps in maternal support policies including paid family leave, pay equity for women, and affordable childcare. Every woman who chooses to give birth should have free or affordable prenatal care and at least one year of comprehensive health care post-partum.”

West Virginians for Affordable Health Care advocates for comprehensive, quality, affordable health care for every person in our country. Comprehensive health care encompasses reproductive health services and includes access to a safe, affordable abortion for all women.

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