

Committee on Energy and Commerce
Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations Chair Diana DeGette

Hearing on “Roe Reversal: The Impacts of Taking Away the Constitutional Right to an Abortion”

July 19, 2022

On June 24, 2022, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the constitutional right to abortion. Today, the Subcommittee will explore the devastating impacts of that unprecedented decision on the American people and the nation’s health. The Court’s decision in *Dobbs*—reversing nearly 50 years of *Roe* and other affirming legal precedent—has wreaked pandemonium for patients and providers.

Confusion. Fear. Refusal. These are the common themes in the weeks since the Court effectively stripped away the freedom of 36 million women to control their own bodies and handed that power, instead, to politicians with extreme agendas in their states.

We’ve been horrified by the reports of a child, a 10-year-old girl, who after surviving rape had to endure being re-victimized when her parents were forced to take her out of state for an abortion due to Ohio’s restrictive abortion law.

And we’ve heard multiple reports of women who have experienced miscarriages or pregnancy complications who were denied or delayed care because of health care providers’, pharmacists’, or health systems’ legal confusion surrounding what was considered permissible care in a post-*Dobbs* world.

Further, patients are being denied medication, some not even related to pregnancy, because their pharmacist refused to fill their prescription due to miscarriage-related risks.

Many of these examples are not new to the reversal of *Roe*—and, in fact, sadly common in some states after years of anti-abortion extremists’ successful efforts to enact restrictive abortion laws in the states.

The volume of the reports now, and the certainty of the harm that lies ahead, is alarming. While we are still just under a month past the reversal of the constitutional right to abortion, the experiences of women subjected to preexisting restrictive state laws and research on their impacts provide us insight into the troubling road ahead.

Despite the fact that the overwhelming majority of Americans want legal access to abortion, for Republicans, the *Dobbs* decision is just the beginning of their radical quest to prohibit and criminalize abortion.

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And now, as federal protections have fallen, abortion bans, already in place in at least eight states, will continue to expand across the country.

Residents of roughly half the states in the nation face an increasingly complex and terrifying legal landscape in trying to access abortion care—undoubtedly putting the health and economic futures of millions of women and families at risk.

While such state abortion bans affect everyone in that respective state, they disproportionately impact those who already face significant barriers accessing the health care they need—including young people, people of color, those living in rural areas, and those striving to make ends meet.

I appreciate that the topic of abortion can be a deeply personal one, and I respect these differences—right up until that belief seeks to deny millions of women the right and access to health care.

Under the guise of personal belief, we will undoubtedly hear inflammatory language and intentional distortions of truth today. However, we must not let this rhetoric or tactic distract us from the fact that health care decisions should be made by patients in consultation with their health care providers, not dictated by politicians.

Decisions like the one made by “We Testify” Colorado storyteller, Erica, who found herself pregnant in 2020 and in no financial position to raise a child. As an adoptee, she thought she would never have an abortion. With the help of midwives, she was able to talk through her options, find the courage to talk to her parents who helped provide funds for her abortion, and make a choice that was best for her.

We’ll be hearing a range of abortion experiences in addition to Erica’s today, including from one of our witnesses. We are also fortunate to be joined by additional experts to provide their legal, public health, and medical expertise.

Democrats in the House have passed critical legislation that enshrines the right to abortion and protects Americans’ access to the full spectrum of health care. I urge the Senate to act quickly and finally pass the “Women’s Health Protection Act” so it can be signed into law without further delay.

As Co-Chair of the House Pro-Choice Caucus and as Chair of this Subcommittee, I will never give up our fight to ensure that everyone in this country, regardless of where they live, has the power and freedom to make their own health care decisions, including about abortion.

I join with Chairman Pallone, Speaker Pelosi, and the Biden Administration in being more determined and committed than ever to continue doing everything we can—at every turn and at every opportunity possible—to restore and expand the freedom of all people to make their own decisions and access the care they need to secure their health and future.