

YWCA's statement on Roe vs. Wade and abortion access in the United States

A message from YWCA Greater Newburyport President Margaret McCarthy, regarding Roe v. Wade

The Supreme Court ruled that women and pregnant people have a right to an abortion nearly 50 years ago. Since that ruling, abortion rights activists have been hard at work to ensure continued, and improved, access to abortion and reproductive healthcare for all people across the United States. The ability to choose when, and if, to have a child is a profound choice with lasting consequences that every person should be able to make for themselves. There is no question in my mind that this is a cause we should all rally behind.

In addition to its impact on the individual, abortion access also has far-reaching socio-economic consequences. And because of its [intersection](#) with gender, race, class, and many other [social identities](#), supporting abortion access is critical to YWCA Greater Newburyport's mission of eliminating racism, empowering women, and promoting peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all. It is unacceptable for a country that claims to value personal freedoms and individual autonomy to deny millions of Americans the right to make choices about their future, wellness, and livelihood.

Why losing legal access to abortion is a national crisis

Abortion access is essential to social justice, gender, and racial equity. Studies show that abortion access impacts financial security, earning potential, labor force participation, career opportunities, and educational attainment of those seeking abortions.

As the Boston Globe [recently summarized](#), overturning Roe v. Wade would set back years of economic and social progress for women and would negatively impact the economy as a whole. "Existing state abortion restrictions already cost the economy an estimated \$105 billion a year by, among other things, reducing the number of women who are working, according to a study by the Institute for Women's Policy Research, a nonprofit advocacy group."

Legal access to abortion [increases women's probability of graduating college by 72%](#). The effect was even larger for Black women, whose chances of completing college increased two- or three-fold. Delaying motherhood by one year due to access to legal abortion [increases women's wages by 11%](#). Abortion legalization also [reduced Black maternal mortality by 30 to 40%](#) by increasing access to safe and affordable procedures. And this matter does not only pertain to the hardships that can arise from unwanted pregnancy. Legal abortion access also [decreases](#) the percentage of children who grow up in poverty. This statistic is especially important considering that many states with restrictive abortion regulations claim they seek to restrict abortions to protect the "sanctity of life" — while also exhibiting inadequate social services and higher childhood poverty rates. ([A Public Health Paradox: States with Strictest Abortion Laws Have Weakest Maternal and Child Health Outcomes.](#))



Greater Newburyport

Although the importance of safe abortion access has been thoroughly documented, legal access to abortion in the United States is currently at great risk, and in turn, so is the well-being of millions of people across the country. Now that the Supreme Court has overturned Roe vs. Wade, other states across the United States are poised to follow with abortion restrictions. As many as [26 states](#) could ban abortion outright.

What does this mean for pregnant people in Massachusetts?

Massachusetts will still allow abortions. In 1981, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruled the state Constitution provides an even stronger right to abortion than the U.S. Constitution. In 2020, the state Legislature affirmed and expanded that right by passing what is known as the Roe Act which allows people in certain cases (such as fatal fetal anomaly or that of a dangerous pregnancy) to have an abortion even after 24 weeks and allows minors between the ages of 16-18 years of age to have an abortion without parental permission. Abortion pills are also available in Massachusetts for those up to 10 weeks into a pregnancy.

What can we do to support legal abortion access?

Even under Roe v. Wade, abortion access has remained inconsistent and inequitable as a result of varying state restrictions and other socio-economic barriers to abortion. In fact, over the past 50 years, [almost all of the more than 1,300 restrictions on abortion have been enacted by states, not the federal government](#). Those seeking legal abortions face a number of undue burdens such as age restrictions, waiting periods, lack of nearby providers, ongoing stigma, harassment at clinics, and more. As YWCA USA has poignantly summarized:

“Every person experiencing pregnancy deserves to be protected, to receive accurate, unbiased medical information so they can make the best medical decisions for themselves, and to make decisions about whether to continue a pregnancy or to access abortion care. Punitive abortion bans disproportionately affect women of color, LGBTQ persons, young women, immigrants, low-income people, and others who have difficulty accessing reproductive health services.”

YWCA Greater Newburyport stands behind legal access to abortion and equitable reproductive rights for all. We urge our YWCA community to join us and YWCA USA in supporting the **Women’s Health Protection Act (S. 4132)** which protects the right to access abortion, free from burdensome and often medically unnecessary restrictions, including mandatory ultrasounds, waiting periods, biased counseling, and irrelevant medical testing. The bill also protects providers offering abortion services to ensure abortions remain safe and accessible. [Click here to learn about ways to take action in support of the Women’s Health Protection Act \(S. 4132\).](#)

Please join us on June 25, 2022 at 10:00 AM on High Street in front of the old court house on the Mell to protest this decision.

Sincerely,

Margaret McCarthy, YWCA Greater Newburyport President