

Healthy Start, Inc. Statement on Roe v. Wade and Abortion Access

On Friday, the Supreme Court overturned the 1973 ruling in Roe v. Wade, which legalized abortion nationwide. As a community that is focused on public health, health equity and centering the lived experiences of marginalized people—in particular Black women—this decision presents an affront to our safety, security and bodily autonomy. What is at stake is bigger than the perceived morality of a personal decision about pregnancy; but the duality of a society where women, children, poor people, people of color, people who are disabled and people of nonconforming gender and sexual identities are oppressed through policy and legislated hatred. In particular, this ruling will have a disproportionate impact on Black women.

While access to abortion care remains legal in Pennsylvania for now, this decision sets in motion a vision for the future that should have us all fearful, if not enraged.

Healthy Start's 2022-2024 strategic plan outlines advocacy as an area for focus and growth. There is no better time than now to reaffirm our commitment to upholding the importance of reproductive rights and justice as a public health imperative. As we prepare over the next few months, here are some actions we will take:

- Ensure that our staff is equipped to provide our participants and other members of our Healthy Start community access to information and referrals to assist them nonjudgmentally with whatever reproductive health choices they are considering.
- To advocate for abortion access in Pennsylvania as a public health and reproductive rights imperative.
- To continue to advocate at the state and federal level for the full range of sexual and reproductive health options for all who seek them.
- Strengthen our partnerships with local BIPOC-led organizations that support reproductive rights and justice.
- To continue to educate ourselves and others on the disparate impacts this overturning of Roe will have on adolescents; Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC); LGBTQ+ populations; disabled people; and other historically oppressed communities.
- Promoting non-partisan voter registration and voting to ensure the voices of our providers and clients are heard now and in November; and as individuals, to make plans for how we will spend our primary and general election.
- And being intentional in engaging men and fathers in the fight for reproductive justice.

Here are some actions you can take:

- VOTE!
- Support local BIPOC-led organizations that support reproductive rights and justice such as New Voices for Reproductive Justice and Planned Parenthood of Western PA.

If you know someone who is in need of legal advice, please have them contact the Women's Law Project or If/When/How. If you know someone who is in need of abortion care, contact Planned Parenthood of Western PA and/or Allegheny Reproductive Health Center.

Finally, the past two years have been filled with very unprecedented events for us all, and we understand that mentally and emotionally, there is only so much that we as individuals and as a community can bear. We urge you to make sure - while fighting for justice, health equity, and overall better outcomes for Black women, babies, and their families - that you also make it a priority to care for your own mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical well-being. Take time away from watching the news and engaging on social media, prioritize spending time with those around you, and decompress through various means of grounding, including meditation, rest, and mindfulness. The fight cannot continue if we don't first take care of ourselves.

Jada Shirriel
Chief Executive Officer
Healthy Start, Inc.

Ena M. Lebel, Esq.
Chair of the Board of Directors
Healthy Start, Inc.

