

Woman's City Club of Greater Cincinnati Statement on the US Supreme Court's 2022 Overturning of Roe v. Wade

Woman's City Club (WCC), a nonpartisan civic organization that has worked since 1915 to promote social, economic, and environmental justice through education, advocacy, and service, is gravely concerned about the impact of the U.S. Supreme Court's reversal of Roe v. Wade, a precedent for 50 years. WCC has never taken a position on abortion because it is such a complex and personal issue, but we cannot stay silent about the Supreme Court's decision. Without Roe and other Supreme Court precedents guaranteeing the right to privacy, women's freedom to make decisions about their own bodies is being eliminated in many states, whose legislatures now have the legal authority to regulate or ban the procedure at any point in a pregnancy and for any reason. The decision occurs at a time when the majority of the country supports access to abortion, at least in the first trimester of pregnancy.

WCC is also concerned with Ohio's "Heartbeat Law," which went into effect when a federal judge dissolved an injunction on the same day Roe v. Wade was overturned and was upheld by the Ohio Supreme Court. Ohio's law bans abortion either at six weeks after gestation, when many women don't know they are pregnant, or once fetal cardiac activity can be detected. It allows for two exceptions: an abortion can be conducted after the six-week mark if a physician finds the procedure necessary to save the life of the mother, or if there is no fetal heartbeat. But there are no exceptions for rape or incest, and doctors who perform an abortion in violation of the law can be charged with a fifth-degree felony.

We concur with the statement issued by the League of Women Voters' (LWV) national office, which says that the Supreme Court "ruling strips women and those who may become pregnant of their bodily autonomy and will have devastating—and immediate—consequences across the country. . . . When women and those who can become pregnant can no longer make reproductive decisions for their own bodies, they are no longer equal individuals in our democracy. This harm will exacerbate societal inequalities and fall disproportionately on people of color and low-income communities already facing egregious obstacles to health care."

These harmful decisions at the national and state levels are an issue of social justice. According to 2019 data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Black women in the United States are five times more likely to have abortions than white women, while Latina women are twice as likely. Nearly half of women seeking abortions are poor. According to the *Ohio Capital Journal* (June 24, 2022). Ohio's population "is only 13% Black, but Black women received 48% of all abortions in 2020." The poverty rate for Ohio's Black people was 27% in 2020, compared to just 10% of white people (<https://talkpoverty.org/state-year-report/ohio-2020-report/>). "With higher maternal mortality, more problem pregnancies, worse health care, and less insurance, Black women especially need reproductive autonomy." In addition, the vast majority (82%) of the 20,605 Ohio women who received abortions in 2019 were on their own—separated, divorced, widowed or never married. The fact that so many unmarried and Black women had abortions suggests they didn't have the financial and emotional support needed to raise a child—often in addition to children they already have ([Washington Post](#), June 25, 2022).

Many worry that the Roe v. Wade decision is the beginning of a slippery slope. The dissenting Justices consider the decision and concurring opinions as an assault on the constitutional guarantee to equal protection of the laws and the right to due process that could also threaten the rights of BIPOC (Black, indigenous, and people of color), LGBTQIA+, and other historically marginalized communities.

WCC maintains its longstanding priority to promote social, racial, and criminal justice, and staunchly supports women's rights as well as equity of healthcare access and gender equality. Abortion is a decision that must be made privately by a person who can become pregnant. It is essential to keep it safe and accessible.