

Michigan is now a safe haven for abortion care, but we still have work to do

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January 22, 2023

Today, January 22, marks the 50th Anniversary of the Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* decision. This first *Roe* anniversary without *Roe* is a grim reminder of all that we have lost since last summer, but it's also a call to action because this fight is far from over.

Thanks to the passage of Proposal 3 in November, Michigan has joined Illinois as a critical haven state in the Midwest for essential sexual and reproductive health care, including abortion. We remain deeply grateful to Michigan voters who turned out in historic numbers in November to ensure that reproductive freedom is now permanently enshrined in our state constitution. Thanks to the collective action by voters and activists statewide, Michiganders now enjoy some of the strongest legal protections for sexual and reproductive health care of any state nationwide.

But we can't forget that this new post-*Roe* reality still presents serious and – in some cases, insurmountable – challenges for patients seeking care.

Since June of last year, Planned Parenthood of Michigan has seen a growing number of patients traveling to us from out-of-state, most of them from states that have significantly limited access to abortion care, and from as far away as Texas, Florida, and Arizona. But for every out-of-state patient we have the privilege of caring for, we know there are several others who couldn't make the trip.

We often say that *Roe* was the floor, not the ceiling, but despite its limitations, that decision provided the foundation upon which the fundamental right to abortion access rested for nearly five decades. And now, without it, the United States is facing yet another public health crisis as thousands of people are being forced to flee their home states and travel hundreds or thousands of miles to access safe, essential, and time-sensitive health care.

Those who are unable to travel are left facing an impossible decision: either carry an unwanted pregnancy to term or turn to unsafe or illegal alternatives. These burdens disproportionately hurt people who *already* face immense and systemic barriers to essential health care, such as Black, Latinx, and Indigenous folks, people with disabilities, people in rural areas, LGBTQ people, young people, immigrants, and those having difficulty making ends meet.

This is a humanitarian crisis, and we won't rest until access is universal.

This last year has been a long and difficult one while we fought to protect abortion access in Michigan. We filed suit against the unconstitutional 1931 abortion ban last spring, pushed through the *Dobbs* decision in June, and ended the year with a resounding victory in the fight to enshrine reproductive freedom in the Michigan State Constitution thanks to the incredible work of the Reproductive Freedom for All coalition.

Despite these evolving legal uncertainties, ongoing challenges, and the historic loss of our rights at the federal level, we are proud that Planned Parenthood of Michigan never closed our doors. It's a promise we make to our patients every day – care, no matter what.

And we are determined to keep it.

Today, as we mark the 50th anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*, we are looking ahead to the future. With Michigan now positioned as a haven state for essential sexual and reproductive health care in the Midwest, we are shifting our focus from defending our basic right to continue providing safe, legal abortion, to scaling up to meet the moment and the ever-growing demand for our services.

Patients need us now more than ever and as one of the few haven states in the region, Michigan is playing a critical role for thousands of people nationwide. So thank you, Michiganders, for getting us to where we are today, but we can't slow down now. We've got more work to do.

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