



Advisory Committee Releases Statement on the Criminalization of Reproductive Health

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Association of Prosecuting Attorneys and Addressing Disparities to Reproductive Health Advisory Committee Releases Statement on the Criminalization of Reproductive Health

For Immediate Release

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The Association of Prosecuting Attorneys (APA), through its Addressing Disparities to Reproductive Health Advisory Committee, hereby releases this statement, the day the U.S. Supreme Court is hearing argument in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization* (The *Dobbs* case will consider whether all pre-viability prohibitions on elective abortions are unconstitutional.):

In the *Dobbs* case to be argued before the Supreme Court today, the state of

Mississippi is effectively asking the Court to overturn Roe v. Wade. If Roe [v. Wade] were overturned or fundamentally weakened, 22 states already have laws on the books that will criminalize abortion. The role of independent, fulltime, and professional prosecutors is critical to preserving public safety, combating injustice, and protecting individual rights and liberties in the United States. Prosecutors are legally trained and have no medical or scientific training regarding personal health decision-making and public health. Forcing prosecutors to do so may severely harm the legitimacy of the justice system and create unnecessary distrust in the government. Prosecutors are stewards of public safety, community trust, and procedural justice. As prosecutors, our sole aim is to do justice. According to the ABA's standards of criminal justice, 'we are not merely... case-processor[s] but also a problem-solver [s] responsible for considering broad goals of the criminal justice system' and 'when inadequacies or injustices in the substantive or procedural law come to the [our] attention, [we] should stimulate and support efforts for remedial action.' Hence, it is urgent that we speak out against the criminalization of reproductive health. Abortion is a healthcare matter and a public health issue. It is a personal medical matter to be discussed privately within the confidence and protection of the physician-patient relationship. There is no role for

prosecutors, or the justice system, in the arena of Constitutionally protected personal health care rights. To criminalize reproductive health risks doing grave harm to the integrity of the justice system.”

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The Association of Prosecuting Attorneys (APA) is a national non-profit whose mission is to support and enhance the effectiveness of prosecutors in their efforts to create safer communities. APA is made up of elected and appointed prosecuting attorneys from throughout the nation and provides valuable resources such as training and technical assistance to prosecutors to develop proactive and innovative prosecutorial practices that prevent crime, ensure equal justice, and help make our communities safer. APA is committed to the pursuit of justice in whatever form best serves the community. This may include legal proceedings against those who would hurt a child or helping an individual complete a diversion program. APA's focus is on preventing recidivism and providing rehabilitation and successful re-entry. Through multi-disciplinary forums APA creates an optimal environment to foster justice and affect change in the community.

APA's advisory committee is composed of prosecutors from across the country to provide leadership and guidance for its critical project, Addressing Disparities to Reproductive Health. Funded by the Collaborative for Gender + Reproductive Equity (CGRE), the goal of the project is to decriminalize abortion, particularly for those individuals impacted by restrictive laws and policies that prevent them from accessing essential reproductive healthcare. The advisory committee is developing equitable and medically informed national policies for prosecutors to address the disparities resulting from unjust and harmful restrictive abortion laws. Future goals for the committee include developing training curricula and providing direction for training and other resources that will assist prosecutors. These resources will focus on decriminalizing abortion and strengthens prosecutors' knowledge of science-based reproductive healthcare methods and outcomes.