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**Arlington County Board Statement on *Dobbs vs. Jackson*, Abortion Rights & Public Health**

On June 24, 2022, the United States Supreme Court issued a decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson* that abandons established precedents and overturns *Roe v. Wade* and *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*. The ensuing restrictions and prohibitions on the ability to access abortion care in multiple states pose a dramatic threat to the health and safety of Americans. Virginia Governor Glenn Youngkin's proposed ban on abortion care at 15 weeks of pregnancy threatens the safety and rights of Virginians, including Arlingtonians, and would create a serious public health concern in our community.

The Arlington County Board is committed to advocating for the legislative and regulatory strategies that can forestall this threat to health and safety. We are further committed to supporting the health care needs of Arlington residents through the direct provision of reproductive health services and through the protection and expansion of providers of abortion services.

A Threat to Public Health

Abortion care is a critical component of reproductive health care. Medical research and practice show that safe abortion services positively impact the bodily and mental health, safety, and financial stability of those seeking abortions.[1] In a country with maternal mortality rates more than double those of other developed nations, a shortage of maternity care providers and no guaranteed access to postpartum care or paid parental leave[2], forced pregnancy and birth will increase morbidity and mortality.[3]

Further, maternal mortality data clearly predicts that the severe health outcomes of a government ban or restriction of abortion care will disproportionately impact Black women, Latinas and other women of color, and older women[4], as well as those who lack access to quality prenatal and postpartum care, such as low-income women and transgender people.

Denial of safe abortion care is also linked to negative social determinants of health for existing children, who are more likely to live below the poverty line and more likely to be exposed to intimate partner violence than the children of pregnant individuals with access to abortion.[5]

Restrictions on the right to access abortion, therefore, pose a public health threat to our community. The Arlington County Board makes the following commitments:

## 1. Our Commitment to Legislative and Regulatory Protections of Safe Abortion Care

For several years, the Arlington County Board has made the protection of reproductive rights a core legislative priority for the Virginia General [Assembly](#). The Commonwealth of Virginia currently protects the right to safe and legal abortion. We will continue to advocate that the General Assembly:

- Uphold the Reproductive Health Protection Act of 2020, which repealed unnecessary barriers to abortion; and
- Take further steps, such as the introduction of a Virginia constitutional amendment recognizing the right to an abortion.

We will further advocate for every federal legislative avenue to protect and expand access to abortion. We call for immediate federal regulatory action to expand access to medication abortion, including:

- Assertion of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA)'s pre-emptive approval authority of abortion pills;
- FDA approval of mifepristone and misoprostol for up to 12 weeks of pregnancy, consistent with the World Health Organization recommendation; and
- Removal of the medically unnecessary FDA requirement that pharmacies receive additional certification to dispense mifepristone.

## 2. Our Commitment to Public Health and Reproductive Health Care

Arlington County's Family Planning Clinic that provides affordable and accessible reproductive health care for women, men and teens and all sexual orientations and gender identities, including exams, contraception options, emergency contraceptives, pregnancy testing and referrals, among other services. Arlington County will continue to provide this care, available without income limits and on a sliding scale of payment, as a means of supporting reproductive health and establishing trusted relationships to protect vulnerable and/or transient community members from misinformation.

The Arlington County Board is committed to building on the existing efforts of the Family Planning Clinic, particularly community outreach services, as well as working with regional abortion care providers to ensure that Arlingtonians can access abortion care, including medical abortion care via telemedicine. Working with these providers, we also seek to identify land use and/or economic development tools and services that can support the expansion of abortion care within Arlington County. We will emphasize the importance of the provision of abortion care – and preparedness to manage the emergency health impacts of any restrictions on access to safe abortion – with our community's health care institutions.

Finally, we are committed to collaboration with the Commonwealth’s Attorney to ensure our policies protect any Arlington resident, visitor or practitioner making the personal medical decision to seek, provide, or obtain an abortion, to the fullest extent possible.

The County Board joins with the many Arlingtonians who have expressed their anger, frustration, and fear at the *Dobbs v. Jackson* decision and at Governor Youngkin’s threats to abortion rights in Virginia and locally. Within Arlington County, we are committed to mitigating and preventing the public health crisis that these actions will precipitate, and to advocating for the protection of the fundamental human right to bodily autonomy.

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[1] ANSIRH, University of California, San Francisco. “The Harms of Denying a Woman a Wanted Abortion: Findings from the Turnaway Study.” April 16, 2022.  
Available: [https://www.ansirh.org/sites/default/files/publications/files/the\\_harms\\_of\\_denying\\_a\\_woman\\_a\\_wanted\\_abortion\\_4-16-2020.pdf](https://www.ansirh.org/sites/default/files/publications/files/the_harms_of_denying_a_woman_a_wanted_abortion_4-16-2020.pdf)

[2] The Commonwealth Fund. “Maternal Mortality and Maternity Care in the United States Compared to 10 Other Developed Countries.” November 18, 2020.  
Available: <https://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/issue-briefs/2020/nov/maternal-mortality-maternity-care-us-compared-10-countries>

[3] Amanda Jean Stevenson. “The Pregnancy-Related Mortality Impact of a Total Abortion Ban in the United States: A Research Note on Increased Deaths Due to Remaining Pregnant.” *Demography* 1 December 2021; 58 (62019–2028).  
doi: <https://doi.org/10.1215/00703370-9585908>

[4] Donna L. Hoyert. “Maternal Mortality Rates in the United States, 2020.” National Center for Health Statistics, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. 2022.  
doi: <https://dx.doi.org/10.15620/cdc:113967>

[5] ANSIRH, 2022.