

**Testimony of**

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**United States Senate Committee on the Judiciary  
“A Post-Roe America: The Legal Consequences of the Dobbs Decision”**

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My name is Dr. Colleen McNicholas. I am a board certified OBGYN trained to provide the full spectrum of sexual and reproductive health care including abortion care. I practice in Missouri and Illinois — two states where people are living such vastly different realities that it should be considered by each one of you to be un-American. On June 24, when the Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade, they effectively created two nations — one where those whose reproductive freedom belongs to themselves and those whose reproductive freedom belongs to a small group of politicians who have effectively appointed themselves as decision-makers over our bodies, lives, and futures.

Today, I am here to speak for the patients I serve everyday — people from across the midwest and south who navigate a ridiculous obstacle course just to access care.

While it may take us years to understand how the Supreme Court decision in the Dobbs v. Jackson case will have impacted public health outcomes, we already know — just 18 days into this post-Roe reality — how it's already disastrously complicating people's lives and putting doctors in impossible situations.

Since ceasing abortion care at our health center in St. Louis, which was the last remaining abortion clinic in Missouri, our health center in Illinois just across the Mississippi River has cared for patients who have traveled as far as 1,000 miles *one-way*. Each one of these patients has told me they had no choice but to travel hours for care. Almost overnight, our Illinois clinic has seen appointments triple — and that's already on top of a double booked schedule we were sustaining in the wake of Texas and Oklahoma's abortion bans.

As we've long said, overturning Roe won't stop the need for abortion. The Supreme Court's decision has already pushed people — the people each one of you represent — into extreme, and sometimes, dangerous circumstances in order to access one of the safest and most common health care procedures.

In Missouri and several other states abortion is banned except in medical emergencies. In other words, in order for doctors to avoid prison time: Instead of treating a patient before their health becomes life threatening, doctors now must contemplate how sick is sick enough before

providing life-saving abortion care. People will suffer unnecessary harm as doctors wait for permission from hospital lawyers to tell them they can proceed. In some circumstances, the abortion care will come too late.

Not only is this agenda unpopular, it is deeply anti-life. We already know that abortion care is inextricably linked to maternal health outcomes. And in Missouri, Black maternal mortality is 4 times higher than for white women. Forcing people to continue pregnancies they either don't want or can't bear will cost lives. Forcing people into parenting without passing policies that address child care costs, paid family leave, or the formula shortage will cost lives.

The anti-abortion agenda is anti-life and hypocrisy at its worst.

I have a plea for our allies too, those of you here who have long stood with us and committed to protecting reproductive freedom: work together, with your colleagues at all levels of power. Do something.

On June 24, one hour before the Supreme Court dismantled abortion rights, I was sitting next to HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra along with partners and allies in Missouri including the Congresswoman from the first district, Representative Cori Bush. In that meeting, we asked the Biden administration to declare a public health emergency to help support the patients who will have to flee their home states for abortion care - as 36 million people of reproductive age now — or soon — may live in a state where abortion is banned. This is the very least in a long list of solutions providers like me need your help on securing so that we can continue to care for the millions of patients who will soon be in a time-sensitive health care emergency of their own. Senators, I come before you tired, frustrated, and angry. Those of us on the front lines don't need more empty gestures. We need action and we need it now. We are out of time.

Thank you for inviting me to share about this time, which I am certain will be a stain on our history as a country. Abortion is normal. Abortion is an act of love. Abortion is health care.

Thank you.