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WGSC Statement on Overturn of *Roe v. Wade*

****Please note that the views expressed here do not represent an official statement from UW System or any UW System campus****

We are feminist scholars trained in intersectional approaches to research and pedagogy, and we are committed to using our collective expertise to navigate a new reproductive health landscape in the wake of [Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization](#). As groups such as the National Women's Studies Association have already pointed out, the U.S. Supreme Court ruling overturning [Roe v. Wade](#) impacts the most vulnerable in our society: women, low-income people, trans and non-binary people, queer people, people with disabilities, racially and ethnically marginalized people, and those at the intersections of these identities will all experience disproportionate impacts from this shift in reproductive health access and will face the harshest mental health and economic impacts. The American Psychological Association released a [statement](#) highlighting how this decision will exacerbate an existing mental health crisis, and the Economic Policy Institute has offered [this analysis](#) of the economic reverberations for those already facing financial precarity. From a legal, historical, political, health, and economic perspective, there is broad consensus that truncated access to reproductive health and bodily autonomy will adversely impact the lives of people across the country. [This analysis](#) from UW-Madison's CORE Collaborative for Reproductive Equity provides a precise overview of the impacts on Wisconsin residents, shedding additional light on the consequences from a health and well-being perspective.

The Women's and Gender Studies Consortium (WGSC) supports existing and future research initiatives across the UW System that advance reproductive health and equity from an intersectional perspective. Based on the ongoing efforts of the [Systemwide Caregiving Task Force](#) and other projects directed towards equity and inclusivity, **we encourage an increased focus in the following areas:**

- [Title IX](#) provides explicit protections for pregnant and parenting students. As the [proposed updates](#) from the Biden administration, [The National Women's Law Center](#), and [The Pregnant Scholar](#) make explicit, this includes absences for related conditions such as abortion and miscarriage. Given the additional hurdles to reproductive health in Wisconsin, students may need additional time to travel and recover from medical procedures related to reproductive health and well-being. We encourage all campuses to provide prompt training and transparent policies on rights of students and employees as they pertain to medical leave, excused absences, and privacy in a post-*Roe* environment, particularly as new policies and clarifications emerge in the coming months.

- COVID-19 and the caregiving crisis have deeply impacted the career advancement of caregivers and student parents nationally over the past two years. [This survey](#) reflects specifics for UW-System. As [The New York Times](#) notes, existing parents seek abortions and reproductive health services at higher rates than other groups and face increased economic, health, and mental-health impacts from decreased access. Given this landscape, we encourage [ongoing policies](#) to support caregivers on our campuses, including a systemwide effort to track the retention and career advancement of caregivers and student caregivers.
- As the [Institute for Women's Policy Research](#) notes, student access to reproductive health services has a direct correlation to graduation rates and overall educational equity. We encourage all campuses to collaborate with student health centers or contracted campus health providers to offer comprehensive health services and referrals in coordination with social workers and trained professionals who can assist with the logistics of accessing care, travel, lodging, and related mental health support and privacy while doing so.
- Academic freedom is a core component of ongoing research and transparent information on the historical and contemporary landscape of reproductive health. [The Chronicle of Higher Education](#) recently commented on potential impacts for course work and content after the overturn of *Roe v. Wade*. Many movements for social justice rest on a strong commitment to reproductive justice, bodily autonomy, and privacy. This history is critical to our work as feminist scholars. As a systemwide program for gender scholars and students, we value academic freedom as a core component of our campus communities and will support faculty and instructors as they navigate the challenges of teaching and researching in a deeply polarized state and national environment. In advance of the academic semester, we encourage all campuses to provide updated training in coordination with UW System Office of General Counsel or a specific campus counsel to clarify guidelines as they pertain to classroom discussions, syllabi material, resources, and student questions on reproductive healthcare, access to comprehensive reproductive health services and privacy when doing so.
- Ultimately, the right to privacy will face new challenges and interpretations in a post-*Roe* world. As this situation evolves, the WGSC will carefully evaluate impacts to privacy based on existing protections embedded in UW System policies pertaining to anti-discrimination and equal opportunity and provide updated responses and resources.

Women's & Gender Studies Consortium

University of Wisconsin-Madison

3301 Sterling Hall 475 North Charter Street Madison, Wisconsin 53706 USA

Phone: (608) 262-3056 Website: consortium.gws.wisc.edu

Universities: Madison, Milwaukee, Eau Claire, Green Bay, La Crosse, Oshkosh, Parkside, Platteville, River Falls, Stevens Point, Stout, Superior, Whitewater