



This testimony has been written and prepared by Céshia Elmore. I am a black, queer, cis-woman who is proud to be a Community Organizer with New Voices for Reproductive Justice, the first Black, women-led Reproductive Justice organization in Pennsylvania. For 18 years, New Voices has been organizing to build power in our communities, and we fight for the complete health and well-being of Black women, girls, femmes, and gender-expansive folx through community organizing, leadership development, and voter engagement. New Voices aims to mobilize towards a future where Black women and gender expansive people enjoy lives devoid of violence, abuse, and neglect, and can thrive across all sectors of society. This requires advancing Racial, Economic, Gender, Environmental, and Reproductive Justice – which includes ensuring access to abortion.

We center the experiences and voices of Black women and femmes,; recognizing that when the needs of the most marginalized are met, all needs are met. This attack on abortion access, is just one component of a concerted effort to continue denying marginalized people basic human rights. We know that Black birthing individuals will be those *most* affected by this overturning. This amplifies the agenda to dismantle black family structures, perpetuate generational poverty, and cause division in our communities. Pre and post-Roe leak, there was little to no protection for Black women and birthing individuals seeking abortion care.

The *Black* women who started the Reproductive Justice Movement have always known that body terrorism is used to concentrate wealth and power in the ruling class using state-sanctioned violence. The history of breeding, forced birth, and experimentation of Black bodies in this country is long and sordid. For Black and Indigenous people, this is a reality that we have always endured for hundreds of years. We must acknowledge that the past that many of you are afraid of returning to, is actually the present for many people living in this country and even in this state.

We know that morality has never saved a Black life when it comes to encounters with racist and sexist vigilantes. This state- sanctioned violence creates a culture of

criminalization toward black people and people of color from police, medical professionals and even other civilians. We've witnessed Black folks being killed for "complying" during routine traffic stops or even sleeping in their own home, imagine the response when a Black person is seeking what's now considered an *illegal* medical procedure. This, on top of the everyday violence already sanctioned against Black women and our families by the state including unequal access to adequate healthcare, unequal access to adequate housing, unequal access to equity in the economy, unequal access to communities with clean air and water, and unequal access to family planning.

We have the right to create families as we see fit. Black birthing people are in a fight for our bodily autonomy and our right to create families in a way that aligns with OUR needs. Abortion access allows for there to be the legal and medical freedom and protection for fertility treatments like IVF, and comprehensive birth control options like IUDs and other contraceptives.

Almost daily, we are seeing more states enact abortion restrictions, especially in the southern region of this country, where 50% of the nation's Black population lives. Even in Pennsylvania, Senate Bill 108 passed through the state senate and house of representatives. A bill which proposes an amendment to the PA state constitution that says there is no right to an abortion in this state and that tax-payer money cannot be used to fund abortion care. Should This bill pass the senate and house in a secondary session at the beginning of 2023, it will, most likely, be put on the ballot for PA voters to decide in the Primary Election in May 2023. There is no compromise when it comes to human rights, and by putting human rights to a vote, that is exactly what the state of Pennsylvania is attempting to do.

Denying bodily autonomy and criminalizing abortion is just another tactic to limit the people's power. If abortion is made into a felony offense, we know what felons cannot do in most states—VOTE!

The elected officials targeting abortion access across the nation, are the same adversaries also targeting our right to vote. The act of voting alone will not achieve liberation. As a harm reduction tool, we can use civic engagement to not only preserve the current state of sexual and reproductive healthcare but demand the holistic healthcare that we *all* deserve. And *that* has an impact reaching far beyond abortion access.

We do not look to court systems for permission or validation. We know that our freedom depends on dismantling systemic misogyny, sexual violence, anti-Blackness, and white supremacy. Our liberation cannot be legislated. No matter what *any* court, or elected official decides, New Voices will continue working to ensure that *all* people have the information, resources, and power they need to feel safe, affirmed, and whole.

The United States UNITED STATES has the highest rates of maternal morbidity and mortality of any developed country *in the world* IN THE WORLD! This *does not* demonstrate a “pro-life” agenda! It does not demonstrate a “pro-life” agenda when Black women are experiencing infertility, mortality and morbidity at *3 to 4 times* the rates of our white counterparts. Higher maternal complications, higher maternal mortality, and higher infant mortality does not demonstrate a “pro-life” agenda.

We expect everyone who is upset and committed to mobilizing to preserve abortion, also upset about all healthcare access, the housing crisis and exposure to community violence because they ALL oppress gender minorities and have a critical impact on sexual and reproductive health. THIS is Repro Justice. Being a reproductive health advocate isn't just about providing access to abortion. It's about dismantling gender oppression and structural racism in EVERY facet of society—housing, employment, discrimination, the environment- THIS is Repro Justice. Policy advocacy, organizing and mutual aid are all essential to ensure that in another 50 years our children are not having the same fight to recognize their basic human rights. THIS is Repro Justice.

Black women understand reproductive and sexual justice as a call for the eradication of racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of oppression in the lives of Black women, our families, and the communities where we live. New Voices will address these systemic injustices through organizing, building political power in coalition, asserting Black Americans' human rights, and continuing to make our voices heard through testimony. Thank you for your time