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Good morning. My name is Sydney Etheredge, I am the President and CEO of Planned Parenthood of Western Pennsylvania. Thank you to the members and the committee for inviting me here today.

I am here today on behalf of the dedicated staff, supporters, and nearly 6,500 patients who access sexual and reproductive health care at Planned Parenthood of Western Pennsylvania

Seven weeks have passed since the Supreme Court made history by overruling almost 50 years of precedent and overturning *Roe v. Wade*. In doing this, the court stripped nearly half the population of a federally guaranteed right to abortion and put medical decision-making into the hands of lawmakers and politicians. Abortion is time sensitive and essential, it is life-saving and it is a decision that belongs to the pregnant person.

As expected, our region has seen the effects of this decision almost instantly with the only two freestanding abortion clinics, Allegheny Reproductive Health Center and Planned Parenthood of Western Pennsylvania, taking on an influx of patient calls and visits. Despite the strain, this has put on our centers—not to mention the challenges travel and other barriers can put on patients—our staff continues to do all they can to ensure that patients get the care they need when they need it. While abortion is still legal in Pennsylvania at this time, it is critically important that abortion remain accessible not just for Pennsylvanians, but for those coming to our state in search of compassionate care.

I want to be clear, restrictions on health care will never make a community healthier or better. With the lack of access to abortion, the consequences and health risks of forced pregnancy have sadly become apparent in states all over the country. Medicine has advanced, and abortion, even when self-managed, is overwhelmingly safe. However, the risk of serious pregnancy complications, including death, remains high. This is especially true for Black women who are four times more likely to die from pregnancy-related causes. Some experts predict that the dangerous combination of restrictive abortion laws, increased births, and insufficient access to care writ large could drive a further increase in the already unconscionable maternal mortality rate in the U.S. – and in Pennsylvania.

Even with all of this information being reported and readily available, Pennsylvania anti-abortion legislators passed an anti-abortion constitutional amendment in the middle of the night and behind our backs—without dialogue from advocates, providers, or patients. The outcome has left many of us outraged as the process of amending our state constitution is being used to threaten our most basic and fundamental right: health care. It is clear we are confronting the fight for our lives.

Every single person deserves access to the full range of sexual and reproductive health care without fear of violence. Providers deserve to deliver care without having to navigate medically unnecessary regulatory obstacles. Yet, Pennsylvania is one of the few access states that require patients to undergo medically unnecessary pre-procedure lab work before receiving a medication abortion. This lab work is not supported by experts in the field and creates yet another barrier to care. As more states push abortion restrictions and bans, patients will continue to look to Pennsylvania as an access point for care. With 85% of counties in the commonwealth without an abortion provider, only 17 clinics left in the state, and many providers still dealing with the impact of COVID-19 on our health care workforce, there is already so much we are all up against. To truly protect women and families, we need to repeal anti-abortion legislation, remove unnecessary restrictions, and push back on new harmful attempts to restrict care, all while working on expanding access to meet this critical need.

Planned Parenthood of Western Pennsylvania is always open to speaking with members about our work, and the ways we can work together to protect and expand access.