

**July 12, 2022—Post-Roe V Wade America Hearing Panel
Witness Testimony**

(Timed at 5 minutes)

Good morning and thank you, Chairman Durbin, Ranking Member Grassley, and the distinguished members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, for the opportunity to testify today.

I'm Juliana Stratton, Lieutenant Governor of the great state of Illinois, and I use she/her pronouns.

Since coming into office, Governor JB Pritzker and I have been focused on the health, safety, and access to opportunities for all women of Illinois, of all backgrounds and ages.

And one way that we worked to make that a reality, is by preserving and protecting legal abortion in Illinois.

In 2019, Governor Pritzker signed the Reproductive Health Act, which:

- enshrined reproductive rights into state law
- repealed outdated laws criminalizing abortion
- and requires private health insurance plans to cover abortion, as the vital reproductive health procedure that it is.

We made a vow that our state will be a beacon of hope for all.

This was a promise we made to the people of Illinois, and I come before you today because people throughout the entire Midwest are relying on our commitment to protect and preserve women's rights—namely the right to an abortion.

It is no secret that Illinois stands out as one of the only states in the U.S. heartland where our laws on legal abortion have not been impacted by the Supreme Court's overturning of Roe V Wade.

We are not just an oasis of reproductive care, but an island.

Here's what that looks like:

It looks like disenfranchised yet determined patients coming from every surrounding state, but also from as far away as Tennessee, Texas, Louisiana, Alabama, and Florida.

It looks like the entire staff in our state's abortion clinics fielding phone calls for appointments because the number of out-of-state patients has doubled since Roe V Wade was overturned—and that is on top of the nearly 10,000 women who already came to Illinois seeking abortion care, according to 2020 data by the Illinois Department of Public Health.

In the coming months and years, these numbers will inevitably increase. And sadly, so too will the preventable suffering and pain of women and families across the nation facing the negative ramifications of a post-Roe America.

Because of the history of systemic racism, we know that inequities are amplified within the Black and Latinx communities. A post-Roe America will be devastating for Black women, whose maternal mortality rate is already two to three times higher than that of white women because of structural racism and misogyny.

One [study](#) (published in 2021 by the population research journal *Demography*) projects that without access to safe and legal abortions, that number will increase by over 30 percent among Black women and nearly 20 percent for Hispanic women.

Let's take a moment to let that sink in... We are facing a future rife with needless death, despite 61% of Americans believing abortion should be legal in most—or all cases—according to a Pew Research Center survey conducted in March 2022. It is hard to overestimate just how devastating the outcome of this ruling is, and will be, despite our years of preparation.

Before the threats to Roe V Wade were fully realized, Illinois was proactive, upholding bodily autonomy, and protecting the right to an abortion. And still, the overturning of Roe V Wade has sent us down a dark, agonizing path.

The Supreme Court's decision does not, quote, "leave abortion up to the states" when every state will be impacted. To be clear, that means every city, town, county—urban, suburban, and rural. And our rural and unincorporated areas already experience inequities when it comes to accessing healthcare overall. The weight of this ruling will surely be felt across state borders.

In Illinois, and in states like ours, we are bracing for what is to come as these diverse communities across the nation, turn to us.

Governor Pritzker called on the President to move forward on key items that will address how states like ours will be affected, like:

- Creating a centralized hub for providers and patients to ease the burden on facility capacity amid higher demand;
- And most of all, Illinois and other states with legal abortion, need more access to federal money to support demand.

I commend President Biden for the steps he has taken to safeguard access to reproductive care through executive order on Friday, which included actions to expand access to contraceptives. This is a great start.

In Illinois, all hands are on deck as we brace for what is coming, because we know we are the only lifeline for so many after so much has been taken away from women... from the American people.

I say this, not just as the Lt. Governor of Illinois, but as the mother of four daughters. My daughters, who now have fewer rights than I had.

And based on Justice Clarence Thomas' concurring opinion, it is likely this may not be the last rights that will be stripped from future generations; as access to contraceptives; and the right to love and marry who you choose; have already come under threat with the overturning of Roe V Wade.

In Illinois, we will not go back; we will not be silent or stand on the sidelines. I thank Governor Pritzker, Illinois' legislative leaders and the state's General Assembly, and all the community advocates who have joined forces with us to ensure that.

We already know how dangerous it is to turn back the clock of progress, and I ask of each of you leaders: Help us push forward, before it is too late.

Thank you.

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