



Planned Parenthood of Northern New England Testimony on the Reproductive Liberty Amendment (Prop 5) to the House Committee on Human Services, January 20, 2022

Good morning. My name is Lucy Leriche and I'm the Vice President of Vermont Public Affairs at Planned Parenthood of Northern New England (PPNNE).

It is my privilege to be here today to voice PPNNE's support for the Reproductive Liberty Amendment, or Prop 5, the proposed amendment that would ensure personal reproductive liberty for every Vermonter.

PPNNE is the largest reproductive health care and sexuality education provider in northern New England, where we served 15,000 patients last year throughout Vermont, and typically serve 19,000 patients when we are not in a pandemic. Our mission is to provide, promote, and protect access to reproductive health care and sexuality education so that all people can make voluntary choices about their reproductive and sexual health.

Patients come to Planned Parenthood for high quality, trauma-informed, nonjudgmental, compassionate and confidential care. Our services include contraceptive care, pregnancy tests, cervical cancer screenings, breast exams, gender-affirming care, sexually transmitted infection tests and treatment, and abortion care. The care we provide our patients is primary care, and for many of our patients, PPNNE is their only health care provider.

The Reproductive Liberty Amendment would protect every Vermonter's right to make their own reproductive decisions, like whether and when to become a parent, use temporary or permanent birth control, or seek abortion care. Passing the amendment is extremely important because we see reproductive freedom being threatened across the country.

Events in recent years have shown us we cannot take these rights for granted.

The reproductive rights we've spent generations fighting for could disappear by this summer. If *Roe v. Wade* is overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court, the ability to access safe, legal abortion will be determined by the states. Amending the Constitution of the State of Vermont to ensure that every Vermonter is afforded personal reproductive liberty is necessary to protect the health, dignity, and equality of all Vermonters.

The 2022 legislative session follows a year of unprecedented state-level attacks on abortion rights across the country. Last year, more than 600 abortion restrictions were introduced, and [more than 100 took effect](#).

What is happening nationally with reproductive rights is dangerous and frightening. Three times now, the Supreme Court has refused to stop Texas' radical new abortion ban from taking effect and forcing almost all abortions in Texas to end. The law bans abortion as early as six weeks into pregnancy—before many people even know they are pregnant, with no exceptions in cases of rape or incest.

In December, the Supreme Court heard the Mississippi case that could overturn *Roe v. Wade* and eliminate the right to abortion that Americans have had for half a century. That decision will likely be issued in June 2022, and we are not hopeful that the justices will uphold this right.

If *Roe* is overturned, nearly half of the country — including 36 million women of reproductive age and other people who can get pregnant, living in 26 states — could lose access to abortion. This poses an immediate threat to patients all across the country.

According to an Associated Press/NORC poll this past summer, 80 percent of Americans support legal abortion. Given the threat to these rights at the federal level, it is important the Vermont legislature makes its position known on reproductive rights. Amending the constitution to ensure that every Vermonter is afforded personal reproductive liberty will make it crystal clear where Vermont stands.

PPNNE firmly believes that each person is capable of—and must be trusted to—make their own health care decisions. The proposed amendment upholds the will of Vermonters – the right of all people to health, dignity, independence, and freedom to determine their own life's course as it relates to reproductive freedom.

Reproductive liberty is a human rights issue. No matter your age, gender, religion, race, sexuality, or how much money you have in your bank account, we all have the right to make important decisions about our lives, our futures, and our bodies. But right now, those very rights are under attack in every corner of the country. And that's why the Reproductive Liberty Amendment is so critically important.

Planned Parenthood of Northern New England applauds the efforts of both the House and Senate in getting Prop 5 to this final vote in the legislature. We ask that you pass the Reproductive Liberty Amendment so that Vermonters can have the final word on protecting reproductive freedom in Vermont. Thank you.