



Position Statement of the Ray E. Helfer Society on Dobbs vs. Jackson Women's Health Organization

The Ray E Helfer Society is an international, multispecialty society of physicians with substantial research and clinical experience regarding the physical and mental health of victims of child abuse and neglect. As physicians caring for abused children and their families, the Helfer Society notes the Supreme Court's recent decision in *Dobbs vs. Jackson Women's Health Organization*. We acknowledge that this decision returns to the states difficult questions about which American voters are sharply divided. However as medical providers we stress that in specific instances abortion restrictions directly harm the children we serve.

We frequently care for sexually abused children who experience or fear pregnancy resulting from their abuse. Sexual assault violently deprives children of their bodily autonomy. An unwanted pregnancy resulting from that assault may compound that trauma, placing the child's life at risk during their pregnancy and potentially forcing them into a continued relationship with their abuser. These children must retain the right to reassert control over their own bodies, and the choice to return to the normal tasks of childhood. We urge states to preserve access to emergency contraception and therapeutic abortion in cases of rape or incest.

In addition, families seeking abortion often do so in the face of great stress. While many families love and nurture their unanticipated children, many families also have limited resources and will be unduly burdened. Families desiring to terminate a pregnancy, but who are required to continue that pregnancy and take responsibility for the resulting child, are likely to be highly stressed.

Financial and other stresses increase the likelihood of childhood adversities, including abuse and neglect. We urge all governments, and particularly states choosing to criminalize abortion, to strengthen the social safety net for struggling families who are seeking to provide a safe and happy childhood for their children.

This statement was adopted by vote of the Society's Executive Committee in July 2022.