

Statement from the Baltimore Yearly Meeting Working Group on Reproductive Justice
July 18, 2022

The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) believe that there is that of God in every person, and that the spiritual journey is one of continual seeking and revelation. Often life brings us to difficult, meaningful moments of decision making. We are taught to hold these decisions in the Light, seeking guidance by Spirit. We may turn to our community for help in gaining clarity.

We know and respect the individuality of each person's spiritual journey, knowing that decisions can lead to both endings and beginnings, often in unexpected ways. The decision to have, or not have, children and the decision of who to marry, or not marry, are examples of deeply personal, individual decisions to be made by the person or people involved, in the presence of Spirit.

We are troubled by recent federal and state legal actions which threaten the autonomy of women's and pregnant people's bodies, and which criminalize these private, personal decisions. Friends should work to decriminalize any such decisions, and to preserve an individual's right and ability to carry out their decision.

Baltimore Yearly Meeting Friends draw on our shared beliefs and practice in rejecting the reasoning that would enable judges and legislatures to ban abortion and promote forced birth, no matter the risks. We support rights of conscience, freedom of religion, and separation of church and state.

As a religious organization that adheres to the testimony of equality, we understand the limitations of focusing on rights without ensuring equitable access to care. We believe an equitable society does not impose the greatest burdens on those least able to bear them. An equitable society cares for, educates, and provides for the futures of all children. We support governmental, NGO, and individual action which works toward such equality in matters of social justice. (e.g. health care, day care, education, living wage, personal safety and family support)

In allyship with other faith traditions and social justice advocates, we seek a world where all people are able to make their own choices about their bodies, their health and their families. To that end, we set forward these queries for consideration by individual Friends, Monthly Meetings, and the Yearly Meeting as a whole.

[insert a selection of queries here]

We advocate for the ability of all families and communities to realize a sense of wholeness with regard to their sexual and reproductive lives. We create safe and healthy environments for children in our faith communities and campaign publicly for just and compassionate laws for family planning, reproductive and sexual health, and gender equity.

We call on Friends who are so led to Learn, Grow and Act. These calls to action will change over time as circumstances evolve. The Working Group will continue to meet to do what?

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Learn

- *Understand the Current Context:* The June 2022 SCOTUS decision, *Dobbs v Jackson*, which overturned *Roe v Wade*, is but one of many anti-abortion and anti-reproductive justice court rulings and laws passed around the country. We know that things are unclear about how this ruling will be enacted, and that many states are expected to enact further restrictions. It is a time of great confusion, with great anger and fear about personal safety and prospects. In keeping with the reproductive justice framework, we know that leaping into action may not be the best plan. Taking time to assess unintended adverse consequences of our actions, or leaving marginalized groups behind, is . . .
- With the recent spate of anti-abortion laws in several states, coupled with the June 2022 overruling of *Roe v. Wade (Dobbs v Jackson)*, many things are shifting rapidly in the reproductive justice landscape.
- *Know our History:* Quakers have a long history of work/advocacy in the fields of sexuality education, reproductive health care, and civil rights.
 - In 1979, BYM passed a minute opposing a constitutional amendment outlawing abortion.
 - Baltimore Yearly Meeting's 1988 Faith & Practice explicitly states: When the number of children exceeds the financial, physical and even spiritual capacity of the parents, a hardship is worked on all involved. Thoughtful decisions either to have or not to have children should be accepted and supported by the Meeting.
- *Understand the Connections:* The radical religious right's strategy to ban abortion is eerily similar to the strategies being used to attack trans and queer people. [Connect to civil rights, separation of church and state].
- Advocate for and provide age-appropriate, medically accurate, comprehensive sexuality education. (e.g. OWL, other programs)
- Learn about Reproductive Justice, Reproductive Health, and Reproductive Rights Frameworks: What are reproductive health, reproductive rights, and reproductive justice? Learn more about how these issues embody Quaker principles and values with an interactive presentation to be developed.
- A few things every Quaker should know about Reproductive Justice: "Reproductive justice" has a broad agenda and is different from "reproductive rights." The understanding of reproductive justice has evolved, and there is no universally accepted definition. Some consider "reproductive health" to refer to clinical care and service delivery. "Reproductive rights," to some, refers to the legal issues. Reproductive justice is an all encompassing term that brings together the social justice aspects of accessing one's rights and receiving care in a . Furthermore, it centers those who are marginalized

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and most adversely impacted by injustice, supporting their agency and amplifying their voices with our own. All definitions recognize that the need for access to resources goes far beyond abortion alone.

Grow

- Host a Reproductive Justice discussion group, book circle, and/or threshing session.
[what to add to this list?]
- Develop Partnerships with Reproductive Justice Organizations:
 - Effective justice witness depends on working in coalition with other organizations to enhance their capacity and provide assistance that is meaningful to them.
 - Listen to the experts who have been doing this work for a long time. Support them and their identified needs, rather than pushing forward to meet our own desire to “do something now.” [don’t like this wording]
 - Quakers can also join multifaith partnerships, such as [Faith Aloud](#), the [Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice](#), and secular partners such as the [National Network of Abortion Funds](#), and [SisterSong](#).

Act

- Integrate reproductive justice framework into the existing social justice work being done at the committee and Monthly Meeting levels.
- Participate in education sessions within the Yearly Meeting. Help define what the topics will be, help connect Friends with subject matter expertise to others who want to learn. Support Friends who are taking time and energy to do this work.
- Organize for Impact with Local Partners: Connect with other congregations and faith-based organizations, and have a representative reach out to your local abortion fund, abortion care provider(s) or Reproductive Justice organization to ask how you can leverage your people, your infrastructure, and your financial resources to support their agenda. For some ideas about how to organize effectively within your own congregation and community, read this open letter to faith communities, “[A Progressive Faithful Response to the Loss of Roe—and More \(PDF, 4 pages\)](#).”
- Speak Up as People of Faith: The radical religious right has successfully wielded abortion as their issue for decades, and progressive people of faith must speak publicly about the theological grounding and values commitments that underlie our support for Reproductive Justice, Health, & Rights. Write a letter to the editor, speak at a rally, hold an event or post a video about why our Quaker faith demands access to comprehensive reproductive health care and reproductive justice for all.

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- Advocate for policy change on the local and federal levels to expand access to reproductive health care, and ensure that people are able to make choices about their bodies, their health, and their families in the context of well-resourced, safe, thriving communities. FCNL [what to say about that?]
- GOTV - Voting is necessary but not sufficient to effect social justice change.

Action steps to incorporate from prior document?

- The areas of greatest need right now are **voter registration**, and helping to elect people who support reproductive justice at the national, state and local levels. Also **fundraising** - for your local abortion fund, indie clinic or for a local reproductive justice organization. And finally, what we used to call “consciousness raising” or **educating ourselves** about these issues so we may speak and act with awareness and integrity.
- Most RJ organizations are overwhelmed with volunteers right now. The most common suggestions I’ve seen since Roe fell are to hold a fundraiser or education/awareness campaign in your own community. You can support your local abortion fund, independent clinic, or other community organization. Eventually, the need for volunteers will open up again at many organizations, but for now, there isn’t enough staff to manage all the well-intentioned people who want to help. In the meantime, educate yourself, network and build support in your communities around issues of reproductive justice and health care access.

Other resources:

Pregnancy Options:

<https://www.pregnancyoptions.info/> Best free resource for pregnancy options, has two workbooks: the Pregnancy Options Workbook and the Abortion Resolution Workbook
<https://www.pregnancyoptions.info/resources>

All Options unconditional, judgment-free support for people in all of their decisions, feelings, and experiences with pregnancy, parenting, abortion, and adoption.

<https://www.all-options.org/>

Spiritual Counseling and Support:

[Faith Aloud](#) provides compassionate spiritual and religious support for people in all their decisions about pregnancy, parenting, abortion, and adoption.

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Abortion Access:

[INeedAnA.com](https://www.ineedana.com) - most comprehensive, up to date list of clinics that are open, their gestational limits, etc.

<https://www.baltimoreabortionfund.org/> Baltimore Abortion Fund is a member of the National Network of Abortion Funds ([abortionfunds.org](https://www.abortionfunds.org/)) providing financial assistance and practical support to individuals who live in or travel to Maryland for abortion care.

The Washington DC metro area is served by DCAF <https://dcabortionfund.org/> (Residents of DC, MD, or VA, or people traveling to DC for their abortion). There is overlap, and the funds work together often.

VA: Blue Ridge Abortion Fund <https://blueridgeabortionfund.org/>

Richmond Reproductive Freedom Project <http://www.rrfp.net/>

PA: Abortion Liberation Fund of PA (fka Women's Medical Fund of PA)

<http://www.womensmedicalfund.org/>

Western PA Fund for Choice <https://www.wpafundforchoice.org/>

WV: Holler Health Justice <https://www.hollerhealthjustice.org/>

(The other fund associated with the WV clinic basically closed when the clinic did)

Self-Managed Abortion Issues:

Legal assistance around self-managed abortion <https://www.ifwhenhow.org/>

Safe, medically accurate information and resources: <https://www.plancpills.org/>

Internet Privacy Issues:

Basic guidelines around accessing information online, digital privacy and personal safety.

<https://digitaldefensefund.org/ddf-guides/abortion-privacy>

Recommended readings:

<https://www.friendsjournal.org/necessary-not-evil-abortion-and-the-stewardship-testimony/>

<https://quakerearthcare.org/friends-seeking-clearness-on-abortion/>

<https://www.renofriends.org/angry-quaker-why-the-equality-testimony-matters/>

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2022/07/access-safe-and-legal-abortion-urgent-call-united-states-adhere-womens-rights> and

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2022/06/joint-web-statement-un-human-rights-experts-supreme-court-decision-strike-down>