



CRISIS PREGNANCY CENTERS OP-ED

Supreme court ruling on Crisis Pregnancy Centers is the Death Knell of reproductive rights.

Crisis Pregnancy Centers (CPCs) are fake women's clinics that operate in a legal blind spot. They are not medical facilities or abortion providers and they present themselves just ambiguously enough to distort the fact that they do not offer medical services. If a person seeking an abortion stumbles upon a CPC, a staff of untrained volunteers will try to manipulate them into carrying the pregnancy to term with disingenuous descriptions of their purpose presented alongside false information about sexual and reproductive health. They prey on low income clients who are lured in by the offer of free ultrasounds performed by volunteers with no medical background, and pregnancy tests, the likes of which are available at the drug store. CPCs stop at nothing until the client has agreed to carry the pregnancy. In situations where the client does not easily acquiesce, they use overt emotional blackmail with false information, all of which are debunked by modern science.

SCOTUS recently ruled in *National Institute of Family Life Advocates (NIFLA) v Becerra* that the state of California cannot force these fake clinics to disclose exactly what they are and what they do (or do not do). This decision breaks with decades of precedent regulating professional and commercial speech going back to *Zauderer v. Office of Disciplinary Council of Supreme Court of Ohio*, decided in 1985. In *Zauderer*, the court decided that state government can "require professionals to disclose factual non-controversial information".

The *NIFLA* Opinion tap dances around the fact that the ruling betrays precedent Justice Thomas, who wrote the Opinion, maintains that it is not a break with precedent, but builds his argument entirely on technicalities. Meanwhile, there are still laws requiring actual doctors to feed patients bad science, ostensibly to sway them away from abortion.

Any threat to *Roe* is patently unjust, racist, and classist. Let's be frank. This was never about *all* women. Straight white women of means have always been able to access safe abortions. Their voices and autonomy have been protected by their status in society long before it was even conceived that persons of color deserved the same consideration. The fall of *Roe* spells disaster for low income people of color. It is appalling that in a country that supposedly prizes freedom, freedom is rationed based on socioeconomic status. *Roe* is an equalizer of sorts. It is a step toward bodily autonomy for the routinely marginalized. It is a solid foundation of reproductive health that we cannot allow to be dismantled. Granted, there is still a mountain of nonsensical laws aimed at weakening *Roe* but imagine how a repeal of this small but meaningful victory would demoralize the Reproductive Justice movement.

Considering the fervor and cleverness with which conservative legislators have combatted *Roe* to date, it is hardly inconceivable that the court will be hearing an abortion rights case in their next session. Four states (Kentucky, Illinois, Louisiana and South Dakota) already have trigger laws to outlaw abortion as soon as federal law allows. Abortion, contrary to pro-life propaganda, is a fundamental aspect of reproductive health. Carrying a pregnancy is the epitome of a life altering decision, not taking into consideration the burden of an unwanted or life-threatening pregnancy. Unwanted pregnancies are proven to have significant emotional and economic impact on the parent, especially so in the US with its abysmal maternal healthcare. If *Roe* falls it releases a tide of anti-abortion legislation that will effectively make one of the thirty-four hundred CPCs in the U.S. the closest a woman can get to an abortion.

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