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PRESS RELEASE
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Statement Regarding December 1 Oral Arguments for *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*.

Over the past few months, Pro-Life Mississippi has been contacted by numerous media outlets asking for comment on the *Dobbs* case: the case heard by the U.S. Supreme Court today regarding whether the state of Mississippi may limit on-demand abortion after the first 15-weeks of gestational life. Instead of issuing the standard press release claiming today is “historic” and “important” and that we are “confident” the Court will overturn *Roe v. Wade*, I thought I would instead share a few personal reflections on what this case means to the state of Mississippi, Pro-Life Mississippi, and me personally.

Pro-Life Mississippi (PLM) is uniquely placed to understand and comment upon the significance of the *Dobbs* case. Pro-Life Mississippi was established in 1984 to serve as a catalyst for pro-life work in our state. Our primary mission is to educate the people of Mississippi about the sanctity of life. As related to this mission, we were part of the coalition that helped pass HB 1510, the Mississippi law now before the Supreme Court.

What this Case Means to Mississippi

A majority of Mississippi voters support HB 1510, as indicated by polling conducted soon after the law's passage. That said, a majority of Mississippi voters also believe abortion should never be permitted, except to save the life of the mother. Mississippi is an unapologetically pro-life state. Perhaps that is because we are widely recognized as the most religious state. Perhaps it is because we are widely recognized as the most generous state. Perhaps it is because Mississippi has a certain independent streak and its people have the moral courage to go against the tide.

Attorney General Lynn Fitch well captures the views of Mississippi voters when she argues that the issue of abortion should be returned to the people to “debate, adapt and find workable solutions.” HB 1510 is an example of such a workable solution. It is a compromise between two diverse points of view. The first view holds that abortion is always wrong and that we should do everything in our power to end abortion. The second view holds up abortion as a key notion of what it means to be a free individual in the modern world. This view was articulated by the Supreme Court in the 1992 *Casey* decision, which claimed that “at the heart of liberty is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life.”

The people of Mississippi respectfully disagree. We believe human freedom and personal identity are not unlimited. We believe freedom is bounded by such things as facts and truth. The truth is that life begins at conception. This is what the science shows. Regardless of how the Supreme Court rules in *Dobbs*, the people of Mississippi will stubbornly continue to witness to this truth. We will do so because we recognize that any conception of freedom rooted in falsehood is no form of freedom at all.

With the *Dobbs* case, the people of Mississippi are not just seeking their “day in court.” Our goal is a lot more simple. Our goal is to witness to the rest of the country that truth still matters.

What this Case Means to Pro-Life Mississippi

Some believe the Supreme Court might use the *Dobbs* case to “return the issue of abortion back to the states.” Many groups, following out this argument, are asking their supporters for more resources, more donations, more of everything as the fight for life becomes a political battle in every state. You won’t see Pro-Life Mississippi playing this game. We are not a political organization. We are a service organization. Our service to the women, children and people of Mississippi will continue no matter what happens in the *Dobbs* case.

Sure, we need your help. We need your financial support. We need your prayers. But we’ve been serving Mississippi for almost 50 years, no matter who was in office or who was sitting on the Supreme Court. Our work doing sidewalk counseling and serving as a prayerful presence at the abortion mill will continue. Even if *Roe v. Wade* is reversed, women in Mississippi will continue having abortions. Even if Mississippi regulates abortion at 6 weeks or throughout the entire pregnancy, women in Mississippi will continue having abortions, even if they go somewhere else to have them.

That’s why our educational work is so important. Pro-Life Mississippi is seeking to change the culture, to build up a culture of life by teaching that all human life is sacred and of inestimable worth in all its dimensions. This includes the unborn, but also the aged and those with physical or mental disabilities. The challenges to life are not going to disappear even if we win the *Dobbs* case. If anything, though, *Dobbs* has given us a fantastic opportunity to expand our educational outreach and to speak to audiences we haven’t reached before. Building upon this foundation, we are going to keep doing all the things that got us here today.

What this Case Means to Me

Many of you know I am a registered nurse. It is an honor to our profession that Rep. Becky Currie, the sponsor of HB 1510, is also a registered nurse. I am pro-life because I am a Christian. In church, I learned God created man in His own image (Gen. 1:26) and this is why human life is sacred. My Christian beliefs were verified and affirmed in the classroom, the laboratory and the doctor’s office.

What the *Dobbs* case means for me is an opportunity for the Court to get its science right. The science clearly shows life begins at fertilization. Much has been made of whether states, like Mississippi, can regulate abortion before a baby can viably live outside the womb. This concept of viability is not based in science. It is a judicial invention.

Viability, as we all know, is an ambiguous, moving target. Advances in technology will continue to push the viability line further back: to 15 weeks, to 6 weeks, and, perhaps, to soon after conception. The Court’s preoccupation with viability is not only unconvincing, it is dangerous and unscientific. It is dangerous because it presumes that a child who needs extraordinary medical intervention to survive is not really a human being.

But science and experience show us that viability is not what makes us human. If it were, we would become less human as we became more elderly and more frail. If it were, the disabled would be less human than others. If it were, anyone who was deathly ill would be undeserving of legal protection during whatever time period they were sick.

As a trained healthcare professional, I know certain observable facts take precedence over others. A beating heart is essential to a patient’s “viability.” A baby’s heart begins beating at about six weeks in the womb. The ability to feel pain is important, and a sign that life is fighting to survive. Babies in utero feel pain as early as 12 weeks. A patient who can see, hear, touch and taste is likely doing fairly well, all things considered. Babies can see, hear, touch and taste by 15 weeks gestation. Recordable brain activity begins at 43 days.

If these basic human functions do not make a baby “viable,” then what does? Surely, not the bare ability to live outside the womb without assistance? Just ask any mother whether her one-month-old, or for that matter, her three-year-old, can live without constant care and attention. Either children in the womb are deserving of legal recognition, or they are not. Again, we know what the science says. Science says life begins at fertilization. It’s time for the law to catch up.

No matter how the Court rules, our mission at Pro-Life Mississippi will be to witness to the beauty and dignity of human life, no matter how old or how “viable.” Thank you for your constant and prayerful support during this exciting time.

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