

Draft Letter October 2022

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Minority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McCarthy, Leader Schumer, and Leader McConnell:

We are writing to address the nation's emerging response to the recent Supreme Court Case, *Dobbs v. Jackson*. This monumental decision, along with its repercussions, has opened the floodgates to a variety of unprecedented challenges. We are especially concerned about the protection of women's health data and privacy, the economic impact of reproductive restrictions, adverse health impacts on women, quality of health care training and the resulting barriers to research and investment in women's health innovation. During these extraordinary times, we request you prioritize legislation that supports vulnerable reproductive and maternal health.

The implications of a post-*Roe* world have already left tremendous impacts on women's health outcomes that will undoubtedly continue to grow in magnitude. Ensuring unobstructed access to safe abortion procedures is crucial to minimizing avoidable reproductive and maternal health complications, or even death. With nearly 24 deaths per 100,000 live births, our country already maintains the highest maternal mortality rate of all developed nations.<sup>[1]</sup> Increasingly restrictive regulations that fail to permit any exceptions under extraordinary medical circumstances will further endanger the physical and mental health of millions of Americans. This is especially true for women of color, and Black women in particular who suffer disproportionately higher rates of childbirth or pregnancy related deaths.<sup>[2]</sup> In 2020, the maternal mortality rate for non-Hispanic Black women was 55.3 deaths per 100,000 live births, 2.9 times the rate for non-Hispanic White women.<sup>[3]</sup>

These recent developments, combined with the lack of regulation on the data captured by digital health tools as well as tracking applications and online searching, wield the potential to jeopardize women's privacy rights and security. Specifically, tools, such as pregnancy apps or menstrual cycle trackers, contain personal

user data that can easily be sold to non-medical third parties with ulterior motives. This concerning method of surveillance may discourage the use of these tools, depriving women of valuable resources in the maternal health care space. This stunted accessibility will only increase untapped opportunity, as it is predicted that the global women's digital health market size will grow to \$4.7 billion by 2027.<sup>[4]</sup>

Additionally, the impacts on the economy are substantial, as many companies have expressed reluctance to expand business investment in states with restrictive policies regarding reproductive health. Abortion restrictions deprive millions of Americans of the opportunity to work, and a 2020 study found that states subjected to such regulation were cost an estimated \$105 billion per year to their economies. Furthermore, it is predicted that the national GDP would rise around 0.5% if state-level restrictions were eliminated entirely.<sup>[5]</sup>

The loss of this economic edge and consequent productivity is exacerbated by the influx of Americans who are projected to travel across state lines to receive abortions, assisted by their employers. Even then, interstate travel is a privilege that is not afforded by all, illustrating how reproductive health restrictions disproportionately harm underserved communities. In fact, Black, American Indian, and Alaska Native women are already 2-3 times more likely to suffer a pregnancy-related death than their White counterparts.<sup>[6]</sup> Further barriers to reproductive health care invigorate cycles of poverty, widening disparities in both healthcare and economic opportunity. As state trigger bans take effect and new laws are enacted limiting women's access to reproductive care, the inconsistent patchwork of care available to women will result in increasing reproductive health care deserts and worse health outcomes for women.<sup>[7]</sup>

The women's health innovation space is another crucial area that suffers, as unprecedented regulations and convoluted policies discourage explorative research in the reproductive space. This is particularly distressing, as the women's health sector already experiences extreme underfunding, with only 7% of the country's digital health funding going towards women in 2021.<sup>[8]</sup> With these new restrictions, investors will be even more reluctant to provide key financial support to potentially life-saving innovations when the sector is so polarized and legally precarious. Thus, the already underserved women's health R&D ecosystem will face devastating new barriers that result in missed opportunities for improved public health outcomes. This loss in health innovation will affect all, not just women.

Thank you for your consideration as we support women's reproductive and maternal health in this critical time. We look forward to your continued partnership and support.

Sincerely,

<sup>[1]</sup> Rice, Andrea. "Maternal Mortality Is Likely to Rise Post-Roe: The Reasons May Surprise You." *Healthline*, Healthline Media, 27 July 2022, [www.healthline.com/health-news/maternal-mortality-is-likely-to-rise-post-roe-the-reasons-may-surprise-you](https://www.healthline.com/health-news/maternal-mortality-is-likely-to-rise-post-roe-the-reasons-may-surprise-you).

<sup>[2]</sup> "Black Women's Maternal Health": *Nationalpartnership.org*, 2018, [www.nationalpartnership.org/our-work/health/reports/black-womens-maternal-health.html](https://www.nationalpartnership.org/our-work/health/reports/black-womens-maternal-health.html).

<sup>[3]</sup> *Maternal Mortality Rates in the United States, 2020*. 2022, [www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/hestat/maternal-mortality/2020/maternal-mortality-rates-2020.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/hestat/maternal-mortality/2020/maternal-mortality-rates-2020.htm).

<sup>[4]</sup> Research and Markets. "The Worldwide Women's Digital Health Industry Is Expected to Reach \$4.7 Billion by 2027." *GlobeNewswire News Room*, Research and Markets, 15 Mar. 2022, [www.globenewswire.com/en/news-release/2022/03/15/2403157/28124/en/The-Worldwide-Women-s-Digital-Health-Industry-is-Expected-to-Reach-4-7-Billion-by-2027.html](https://www.globenewswire.com/en/news-release/2022/03/15/2403157/28124/en/The-Worldwide-Women-s-Digital-Health-Industry-is-Expected-to-Reach-4-7-Billion-by-2027.html).

- [5] Durkee, Alison. "Overturning Roe v. Wade: Here's How Abortion Bans Will Hurt State Economies and the GDP." *Forbes*, 27 June 2022, [www.forbes.com/sites/alisondurkee/2022/06/25/overturning-roe-v-wade-heres-how-abortion-bans-will-hurt-state-economies-and-the-gdp/?sh=af739693c6d8](https://www.forbes.com/sites/alisondurkee/2022/06/25/overturning-roe-v-wade-heres-how-abortion-bans-will-hurt-state-economies-and-the-gdp/?sh=af739693c6d8).
- [6] Rice, Andrea. "Maternal Mortality Is Likely to Rise Post-Roe: The Reasons May Surprise You." *Healthline*, Healthline Media, 27 July 2022, [www.healthline.com/health-news/maternal-mortality-is-likely-to-rise-post-roe-the-reasons-may-surprise-you#Abortion-bans-and-maternal-mortality:-Whats-the-link](https://www.healthline.com/health-news/maternal-mortality-is-likely-to-rise-post-roe-the-reasons-may-surprise-you#Abortion-bans-and-maternal-mortality:-Whats-the-link)
- [7] Harris, Lisa H. "Navigating Loss of Abortion Services — a Large Academic Medical Center Prepares for the Overturn of *Roe v. Wade*." *New England Journal of Medicine*, vol. 386, no. 22, June 2022, pp. 2061–64, <https://doi.org/10.1056/nejmp2206246>.
- [8] "Building Comprehensive Women+ Digital Health: Eight Sectors Serving Women+ Needs | *Rock Health*." *Rock Health | We're Powering the Future of Healthcare. Rock Health Is a Seed and Early-Stage Venture Fund That Supports Startups Building the next Generation of Technologies Transforming Healthcare.*, 27 Sept. 2021, [rockhealth.com/insights/building-comprehensive-women-digital-health-eight-sectors-serving-women-needs/](https://rockhealth.com/insights/building-comprehensive-women-digital-health-eight-sectors-serving-women-needs/).