



National Homelessness Law Center Condemns Supreme Court Decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* as Violation of Human Right to Health Care and Harmful to Persons Experiencing Homelessness

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[The National Homelessness Law Center](#) stands for universal human rights for all people, including the human rights to health care and to housing. A necessary component of this human rights work is to protect the legal rights and lives of persons seeking services derived from either of these rights. Today, the US Supreme Court in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, in failing to find constitutional protection for abortion and overturning *Roe v. Wade*, rolled back the human right to health care in the US. Because the rights to health care and housing are interdependent, in the absence of other remedial steps, the decision in *Dobbs* will result in increased housing instability and homelessness, and all the attendant dire consequences, for the most vulnerable Americans. This decision will hurt all Americans, but because of structural racism, it will hurt Black, Indigenous, and other families of color disproportionately.

According to the American Public Health Association, persons who seek, but are denied abortions are up to [three times more likely](#) to fall into poverty than persons able to obtain abortion health care. People experiencing homelessness and poverty already have [higher rates](#) of unplanned pregnancy, have disparate access to comprehensive sex education and birth control, and are less likely to have access to health insurance. According to the National Health Care for the Homeless Council, women experiencing homelessness are [less likely to receive adequate prenatal care](#) than low-income housed women, leading to worse pregnancy outcomes. As of 2021, 16 states did not permit minor youth experiencing homelessness, unaccompanied by a parent or guardian, [to consent](#) to their own medical care under law. Twenty-seven states did not expressly allow minor unaccompanied homeless youth [to apply for medical insurance](#) and [three states](#) did not permit minors to consent to their own examination and treatment for sexual assault. Forced pregnancy and parenthood can be traumatic. The consequences of unplanned pregnancies include job loss, housing instability and further homelessness.

The cost of basic survival is beyond reach for millions of people both with and without children. The National Low Income Housing Coalition has [well documented](#) that there is no state, metropolitan area or county in the US where a full-time minimum wage worker can afford a modest two-bedroom apartment. Federal public benefits such as Temporary Aid to Needy Families and social security disability benefits, as well as countless state benefit programs, have all failed to keep pace with the price of housing. These facts are already true without the added financial burden and other consequences of unplanned children.

Between 1988 and 2020, families experiencing homelessness increased from 1% of the overall homeless population to 30% of the population of unhoused people. [Statistically](#), a homeless family is most likely to consist of a single, Black mother under 27, with two children under the age of six, who has experienced domestic violence or other forms of trauma. Because of [structural racism and network impoverishment](#), Black, Indigenous, and other people of color are more likely to be made homeless as the result of an unexpected new expense, such as those associated with childbirth. Failure to ensure people's right to bodily autonomy will likely make the racially disparate impact of homelessness even worse.

Criminalizing access to reproductive health care is a [violation of basic human rights](#). The Law Center's [Housing Not Handcuffs campaign](#) employs advocacy and litigation to challenge laws and practices that criminalize homelessness, a violation of the human right to housing. We stand with sister campaigns protecting, not criminalizing, access to health care. At their most basic levels, all of our movements work towards a future in which people are free to make decisions about their own lives and futures, given the circumstances under which they are living. This future includes the freedom to make decisions about one's shelter and about one's body.

As [SisterSong](#), a coalition of the architects of the reproductive justice movement, say about the movement: "Our society will not be free until the most vulnerable people are able to access the resources and full human rights to live self-determined lives without fear, discrimination, or retaliation ... [reproductive justice] is simply human rights seen through the lens of the nuanced ways oppression impacts self-determined family creation." To fully realize this version of freedom of justice, our movements must work together to ensure that all people have the rights, tools, and resources they need to plan dignified lives for themselves and their families.

If interested taking action:

- **Research where your state stands:** [Sixteen states](#) protect abortion access under state law. In the wake of the leaked draft of Dobbs, jurisdictions, such as the District of Columbia [introduced legislation](#) to create sanctuaries for people traveling from out of state to access abortion health care. Track laws related to youth homelessness, including the [ability to consent to medical care](#) and [obtain health insurance](#).
- **Donate:** Abortion Funds provide financial and logistical aid to persons seeking abortion health care. A [List is available here](#).
- **Engage:** For more information on legal strategies and to support those defending the right to access abortion health care, visit the [Center for Reproductive Rights](#).