



## **TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE HEALTH AND GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS COMMITTEE**

### **HB626 Pregnant Person's Freedom Act of 2022**

**Position: Support**

**By: Nancy Soreng, President**

**Date: March 11, 2022**

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan organization that works to influence public policy through education and advocacy. The League believes in the constitutional right to privacy of the individual to make reproductive choices. The League supports the right for all people to make their own decisions about their healthcare.

In the United States (U.S.), there were over six million pregnancies and 629,898 abortions in 2019. About half of those pregnancies were unintended. Miscarriages occur in 10-15% of pregnancies. In 2006-2020, the National Advocates for Pregnant Women estimated that 1,254 pregnant people were arrested, detained, or experienced equivalent deprivations of their liberty.

In 2021, Brittney Poolaw was convicted of manslaughter for experiencing a miscarriage at 17 weeks. She was sentenced to four years in prison. The prosecutor blamed the miscarriage on Brittney's alleged use of controlled substances. The medical examiner's report did not identify controlled substances as the cause of the miscarriage.

States have enacted over 100 abortion restrictions in 2021. This is the highest number of restrictions passed since *Roe v. Wade* was decided by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1973. Much of the attention has focused on the Texas law (SB8). The Texas abortion ban makes it illegal to get an abortion at 6 weeks. The law also encourages the public to file lawsuits against health care providers and any individual that assists a person with obtaining an abortion.

The Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) heard oral arguments in *the Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* case in December 2021. A case that examines the constitutionality of Mississippi's 15 week abortion ban. The state of Mississippi asked SCOTUS to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, the case that affirms a constitutional right to abortion in the United States. A ruling in this case is anticipated by June 2022. If SCOTUS overturns *Roe*, it will allow states to ban abortion.

Abortion restrictions and bans are a violation of human rights and reproductive freedom. They increase obstacles to accessing health care especially for people with low income and people of color. HB626 prohibits the prosecution of pregnant people and people who have experienced pregnancy loss or abortion. The bill also protects individuals that provide support to people seeking abortion and experiencing pregnancy loss.

**The League urges a favorable report for HB626.**