



Press Release
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Black Women's Organizations File U.S. Supreme Court Brief in Support of Abortion Rights in Texas

(Washington, DC) - Twelve Black women's Reproductive Justice organizations, led by [In Our Own Voice: National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda](#), filed an *amicus* [brief](#) in the U.S. Supreme Court case *Whole Woman's Health, et al., v. Kirk Cole, Commissioner of the Texas Department of State Health Services, et al.*, highlighting the devastating impact of the clinic closures on Black women in Texas.

"Women's clinics across the country provide critical health care for women," said Marcela Howell, executive director of In Our Own Voice: National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda. *"Politicians who pass these types of laws do not care about the health and wellbeing of women. They are only interested in stopping access to abortions."*

"We hope that the U.S. Supreme Court will see right through this sham and uphold our constitutional right to access all reproductive health care services, including abortion care," she added.

The *amicus* [brief](#) further details the devastating health outcomes Black women may experience as a result of the Texas clinic shutdown law. Prior to the enactment of HB2, there were more than 40 clinics providing reproductive health care, including abortion services. Today, only 19 of these clinics remain. Because of these cuts "the reproductive health care of the more than 725,000 reproductive-aged Black women living in Texas" is in jeopardy.

Not only has the Texas clinic shutdown law added significant travel and longer waiting periods for women seeking abortion services, but it has also impacted access to other reproductive health services, such as family planning, prenatal care, maternal health care, and breast cancer screenings.

"Black women already face systemic barriers to quality, affordable reproductive health care, this law just exacerbates that harm," added Howell. *"The law's practical effect is barring Black women in Texas from exercising their legal right to an abortion."*

Joining In Our Own Voice in the *amicus* brief are [11](#) Black Women's RJ organizations: [The Afiya Center](#) (TX), [Access Reproductive Care-Southeast](#) (GA), [Black Women for Wellness](#) (CA), [Black Women's Health Imperative](#) (national), [New Voices for Reproductive Justice](#) (PA), [SisterLove, Inc.](#) (GA), [SisterReach](#) (TN), [SisterSong – National Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective](#) (national), [SPARK Reproductive Justice NOW!](#) (GA), [URGE – United for Reproductive and Gender Equity](#) (national), and [Women With a Vision](#) (LA).

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Background on the case:

The [case](#) challenges two provisions of the 2013 Texas law HB2, which threatens to reduce the number of clinics in Texas to fewer than ten, inflicting lasting harm on women in Texas. The first provision requires all abortion providers to obtain local hospital admitting privileges, a medically unnecessary mandate that has already closed more than half of the clinics in the state. The second provision requires every reproductive health care facility offering abortion services to meet hospital-like building standards as an ambulatory surgical center (ASC), which can amount to millions of dollars in medically unnecessary building updates.

Case history: *Whole Woman's Health v. Cole* (formerly *Whole Woman's Health v. Lakey*)

Following a lawsuit brought by the Center for Reproductive rights on behalf of Whole Woman's Health and several other Texas health care providers in April 2014, a federal district court blocked the the ambulatory surgical center requirement and the admitting-privileges requirement. On October 2, 2014, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit stayed that decision and allowed the law to immediately take effect. The majority of the clinics had to shut their doors.

However, on October 14, 2014, the U.S. Supreme Court reinstated the federal court injunction, allowing many of the previously closed clinics to reopen their doors while the state's appeal moved forward. On June 9, 2015, the Fifth Circuit's final decision once again upheld the state restrictions in substantial part, this time threatening to shutter all but 10 abortion providers in the state. Once again, the U.S. Supreme Court stepped in to block the Fifth Circuit's decision and allow the clinics to remain open while the legal challenge continued.

The case is now before the U.S. Supreme Court.

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To interview Marcela Howell, Executive Director of In Or Own Voice: National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda, or the executive directors for any of the Black women's Reproductive Justice organizations, please contact Michelle Batchelor at michelle@blackrj.org