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Advocates discuss practical, political implications for Wisconsin if Roe v Wade is overturned.

MADISON - “We have to remember that this is still a draft opinion and not a formal decision, and abortion remains legal in Wisconsin today,” said Tanya Atkinson, president and CEO of Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin. Atkinson spoke during an online town hall meeting her organization convened on Wednesday to discuss the implications of the leaked draft opinion joined by a majority of justices on the U.S. Supreme Court overturning Roe v. Wade.

“Planned Parenthood Wisconsin’s doors remain open and abortion services are available to patients who need an abortion,” Atkinson said. Still, she added, “it looks like they’re poised to fully overturn Roe.”

Planned Parenthood and abortion rights advocates have been preparing for the possibility that Roe will be completely overturned. In Wisconsin, an 1849 criminal statute that is unenforceable as long as Roe stands makes providing an abortion a felony. Should Roe be overturned this year, as expected, Planned Parenthood would stop offering abortion services in Wisconsin immediately on the day the decision comes down. Staff plan to pivot to helping patients who can no longer access abortion in Wisconsin travel to neighboring states.

“We will have navigators that will help navigate patients to a state that respects people’s ability to make their own health care decisions,” Atkins said, naming Illinois and Minnesota as two possible destinations.

Other preparations by an internal working group at Planned Parenthood include exploring getting Wisconsin abortion providers licensed in Illinois “so that they may provide abortion care where it remains legal,” said Michelle Velasquez, legal director for advocacy at Planned Parenthood. Nurses, doctors and support staff in Wisconsin are also prepared to work with family planning staff in surrounding states to help manage an expected surge of 30,000 or more patients from around the Midwest into states where abortion remains legal.

Some Wisconsin staff are also preparing to assist with family planning services for out-of-state patients who may have difficulty receiving non-abortion services during the surge, Velasquez said.

Planned Parenthood Wisconsin is also preparing to advocate for people seeking abortion services who are under court-ordered guardianship, civil commitment, or other orders from the child welfare or criminal justice systems not to leave the state, by filing motions and making requests with the appropriate authorities.

Meanwhile, abortion rights advocates continue to push for the repeal of Wisconsin’s criminal abortion ban — statute 940.09 , which holds that “Any person, other than the mother, who intentionally destroys the life of an unborn child” is guilty of felony and defines “unborn child” as “a human being from the time of conception until it is born alive.”

Because the law includes a six-year statute of limitations, Wisconsin’s Planned Parenthood clinics will not take the risk of providing abortions, even though Attorney General Josh Kaul has said he will not pursue charges against abortion providers under the 173-year-old law. Even if Kaul and Democratic Gov. Tony Evers, who support abortion rights, win re-election this year, a subsequent administration could choose to prosecute abortion providers under the law, which includes penalties of up to six years in prison.


Thou Shalt:
Keep thy theology
off my biology!
Godless
Goddess