

Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Statement on Passage of HB 302

On June 24, 2022, the Supreme Court ruled in the *Dobbs v. Jackson's Women's Health Organization* that the constitution of the United States does not confer the right to abortion and therefore previous court cases, most notably *Roe v. Wade* (1973, 7-2 decision) was no longer in effect. Laws pertaining to abortion rights are now up to the 50 individual states.

In light of the legislative decision passed by the West Virginia House and Senate on Tuesday, September 13, 2022, and correspondence sent to the campus community from President Brad Smith, the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies program feels compelled to issue a statement on behalf of our program. We are not authorized to speak for Marshall University as a whole.

We stand for bodily autonomy; the right to privacy; safe, affordable access to healthcare; and reproductive justice. We believe the passage of HB 302, which all but entirely bans abortion in the state, will have a profoundly negative impact on the health and wellbeing of all West Virginians, but especially those who are already marginalized due to race, class, gender identity, ability, immigration status, and age. Although there are technical exceptions in the case of rape, incest, and medical necessity, the realities outlined by the language of the bill (including, but not limited to, specific timelines, locations, and the involvement of law enforcement) all but eliminate these as well. We believe in a person's right to choose based on accurate, bias-free information and understand that regardless of reason, the decision to stay pregnant should be made in consultation with a trained medical professional in a compassionate environment free from judgment. We denounce the passage of HB 302.

We urge and encourage those with a vested interest in Marshall University and West Virginia to educate themselves and their communities; get involved with organizations that offer healthcare services and funding; and to make their voices heard at the polls during this upcoming—and future—elections.