

Contact:

Zack Gingrich-Gaylord
Communications Manager, Trust Women
O: 316-425-3215
M: 316-737-1300
Zackgg@itrustwomen.org

Access to safe and commonly prescribed abortion medication necessary to ensure safety during the COVID-19 pandemic

Trust Women Founder and CEO Julie Burkhardt Condemns SCOTUS Ruling Restricting Access to Essential Abortion Medication

WICHITA, KS—The U.S. Supreme Court’s recent ruling reinstating rules that require in-person pickup of the abortion medication, mifepristone, is an unnecessary and punitive ruling that puts people across the United States at increased risk of contracting COVID-19, especially people in Black and Latinx communities.

“Mifepristone is a safe and noninvasive choice for over a third of all women seeking abortions,” said Julie A. Burkhardt, founder and CEO of Trust Women. “Having an option for women to safely and privately end their pregnancies at home, under the remote supervision of their physician, is essential and dignified health care during the pandemic.

“In this time of crisis, we must be taking great care to ensure that citizens, as well as health care providers, are safe. This includes ensuring that people are receiving essential health care as close to home as possible, and helping people access that care quickly and expediently. We must be focused on solutions to the COVID-19 pandemic, not getting derailed by cruel and opportunistic political posturing.”

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to flood our country’s hospitals and keep our communities mostly shutdown throughout the winter, many health care providers are looking for ways to treat patients safely and remotely when possible. By denying people abortion access through this ruling, the Court is putting people in harm’s way. The consequences are unnecessary and avoidable:

- This ruling will force people to travel for essential health care—in many cases traveling hundreds of miles—when they should otherwise be staying close to home.
- Pregnant women may become desperate and try to terminate pregnancies without qualified medical guidance.
- Delaying access to abortion risks increased negative health outcomes if pregnant women are diagnosed with COVID-19.
- Putting obstacles in the way of patients who may otherwise qualify for a medication abortion will delay treatment and push many patients into in-clinic surgical procedures.

“Women must already navigate excessive barriers and obstacles to access abortion, such as transportation, childcare and family obligations. This Supreme Court ruling says to women and families across the United States that their lives do not matter,” said Ms.

Burkhart.

[According to the Guttmacher Institute](#), nearly a third of women aged 15-44 live more than 30 miles away from the nearest reproductive health care clinic. This disparity is only worsening with the closure of independent clinics across the United States. Since 2015, [127 independent clinics have been forced to close](#), further increasing the lack of access to essential health care and emphasizing the need for new methods of providing care at a distance.

Because of the impact this ruling will have on people of color, the poor and rural families across the country, the incoming Biden-Harris administration must quickly bring the in-person requirement for mifepristone into alignment with other similar medications, and issue non-enforcement guidelines for the duration of the pandemic.

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Julie A. Burkhart is founder and CEO of Trust Women, a reproductive rights organization that opens and operates clinics in underserved areas. Ms. Burkhart is a lifelong activist for choice. She worked for seven years with Dr. George Tiller as his spokesperson and directed his political action committee, ProKanDo. After Dr. Tiller's murder in 2009, Ms. Burkhart founded Trust Women, and, in 2013, opened the first Trust Women Clinic in Wichita, returning abortion services to the people of South Central Kansas. In 2016, Ms. Burkhart opened the second Trust Women clinic in Oklahoma City, expanding abortion access in the largest metropolitan area in the United States without access to reproductive health care. .

Her advocacy work with Trust Women seeks to educate, engage and mobilize constituents in states hostile to abortion rights. She leads the fight for choice in legislatures and courtrooms, and has been at the frontlines of reproductive justice for three decades.

Trust Women opens clinics in underserved communities so that all women will have access to reproductive health care. Trust Women envisions a day when all people have access to reproductive health care, no matter where they live or their ability to pay.