



Michigan Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice
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Talking about Reproductive Justice with a Religious Voice

For 35 years we have heard the relentless refrain that abortion is morally wrong and hell is the only destination for those who think otherwise. However, it is morally right to be pro-choice and religious. Clergy and lay people from mainstream religions are pro-choice. Many clergy worked to legalize abortion prior to the U.S Supreme Court decision, *Roe v. Wade*. They did so because they saw the desperation of women with unintended pregnancies. Now, they believe it is time to reclaim religion from extremists.

Overall messages

- We celebrate the principle of religious liberty in this country.
- There is no single “religious” view on health care issues. Timely and dignified access to health care is a broad moral and religious issue among many faiths.
- Reproductive health care is part of basic health care.
- Protection of religious freedom for all is especially vital in health care because religious and personal beliefs regarding health care matters are widely diverse.
- The tremendous disparity in beliefs regarding health care also supports government regulation that accommodates all religious and personal views and practices to the greatest extent possible while preventing harm to others.
- There is no religious or scientific agreement on when life begins.
- Being pro-choice means believing that people should make their own decisions based on their own values and beliefs.
- The best way to prevent abortions is to prevent unintended pregnancies.
- The best way to prevent unintended pregnancies is to improve access to education and health care.
- Women need more than prayers to prevent unintended pregnancy.

Issue specific

Contraceptive Equity

- Prices for birth control are skyrocketing and women who are trying to act responsibly, are struggling to afford their birth control. These women should be encouraged and assisted -- not penalized with unnecessary barriers than can easily be fixed by making them a part of health insurance prescription coverage.



- Women pay up to 68% more than men in out-of-pocket health care expenses, mainly due to the cost of contraception. Health insurance plans that cover prescriptions should be mandated to cover contraception.

Emergency Contraception

- Emergency contraception is one of the health care issues on which people's divergent views have led to public controversy.
- Having emergency contraception available in the emergency room is a social affirmation that women are human beings who have the physical, emotional and spiritual power within themselves to make the best decision for their own care.
- To withhold from a rape victim information necessary to her medical care and future well-being is a moral and ethical travesty.
- Women who have been traumatized by rape deserve not to be further traumatized by the possibility of pregnancy.
- The narrow views of a few ideologues should not force us to allow women to destroy their emotional health and well-being by preventing them from receiving the health care they need.
- We should remove all stumbling blocks from the path of women seeking help and compassion.

Pharmacy refusals

- A completely responsible and moral woman can endure great distress and run the risk of a pregnancy that she does not want because some pharmacists believe their own morality trumps the woman's.
- In matters of faith, one person's conscience ends where another's begins.
- People of faith believe strongly in individual religious liberty and that society has a responsibility to ensure that exercise of this liberty does not harm others.
- More than one religious view is at stake in the regulation of health care and the dispensation of medical treatment.
- Not all religions and religious organizations broadly oppose any and all regulations or standards that touch the exercise of religious beliefs.
- Religious liberty and government regulation cannot always be mutually exclusive.
- Pharmacists have rights and religious freedoms but patients have rights and are entitled to protection of their religious and ideological freedom too. Inevitably, beliefs will diverge.
- Some pharmacists argue for their own protection but not the same protection for the convictions of other members of the population, most notably patients.

Abortion

- We should do all we can to prevent abortions by preventing unintended pregnancies through comprehensive sexuality education and access to affordable health care.
- People of faith value the potential of fetal life but are also committed to women as responsible decision-makers.
- There is no religious consensus on when life begins.
- There is nothing in the Bible that says abortion is wrong or a sin.



- Abortion is a moral issue. When abortion was illegal, women died. Today, worldwide, 19 million unsafe abortions are performed. According to the World Health Organization, they account for 13 percent of all maternal mortality, leading to approximately 68,000 deaths each year. We cannot allow women to die when we have a safe way to prevent those deaths.
- Many people of faith believe that the ability to make personal, moral decisions is a gift from God.

Late-term abortion bans

- **The term “partial-birth abortion” is a marketing and not a medical term.** It is a term invented by people opposed to abortion. They claim they want to outlaw only the medical procedure known as D&X (dilation and extraction).. But legal and medical experts say “partial-birth abortion” bans would outlaw an array of safe and common abortion procedures used throughout pregnancy, including before a fetus is viable.
- **Doctors need to use their best medical judgment to decide what medical procedure is safest for each patient.** The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) has stated that in some cases, particularly for women whose fetuses have genetic or congenital anomalies, D&X may be the safest and most medically appropriate procedure. A D&X may reduce the risk of lacerating the uterus, reduce the possibility that fetal tissue will remain in the woman’s body, where it can cause infection, and reduce the length of time a woman is under anesthesia.
- Late-term abortions make up less than 1% of all abortions.
- Late-term abortions occur in **wanted** pregnancies where something has gone tragically wrong. Some women, especially those who end wanted pregnancies because of their own or their fetus’s health problems, ask for a procedure that yields an intact fetus so that may hold it, grieve its loss, and bury it. Additionally, intact fetuses facilitate testing for genetic anomalies, allowing women to make more informed decisions about the risks associated with becoming pregnant again.

Comprehensive sexuality education

- Americans overwhelmingly favor responsible sexuality education that includes accurate information about abstinence and contraception, including:
 - 76% of those who identify themselves as Protestants,
 - 85% of those who specify they are Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Lutheran, or United Church of Christ,
 - 79% of Methodists,
 - 57% of Baptists,
 - 74% of Catholics,
 - 62% of those who identify as born-again Christians, and
 - 67% of those who identify as fundamentalist/evangelist Christians.