

Hi my name is Lucie Arvallo (she/her), and I am the Executive Director of Jane's Due Process. I see every single day how important contraceptive access is for young people, and I am here to urge every member of this committee to ensure young people have access to the full spectrum of reproductive healthcare access without political interference.

At Jane's Due Process we help young people in Texas navigate parental consent laws and abortion bans to confidentially access abortion and birth control. In a state that is hostile to not only contraceptive access, but abortion and comprehensive sex education, a trusted, confidential, and scientifically accurate resource is crucial.

While a majority of our clients involve their parents in their healthcare decisions, the most vulnerable young people often do not have that choice. Young people experiencing family violence, separated but not emancipated from their parents, or unsupportive family units are often disregarded in mandatory parental involvement laws. A 2022 study of sexually active Texas minors seeking contraception found that many wanted to use a highly effective method to prevent pregnancy but were unable to involve a parent to obtain care. The Texas Policy Evaluation Project found that young people subject to mandatory parental consent laws for clinician-provided contraception, are more likely than those who do not report these barriers to stop seeking care and use less effective contraceptive methods or no method; they are also more likely to experience higher pregnancy and birth rates. Even when young people have parental support, confidential access remains crucial to empower them to choose their contraceptive method and take an active role in accessing services that impact their future health and reproductive autonomy. Requiring parental consent for contraception contradicts guidance from professional medical associations and creates unnecessary barriers that prevent minors, particularly those who are already vulnerable, from obtaining the most effective methods of contraception.

At Jane's Due Process we are the only abortion fund in the country that solely focuses on helping young people access the full spectrum of reproductive health care, and that is because we recognize the intersecting and complex web of restrictions that young people in Texas face, which seek to restrict access to the information and resources they need to make decisions about their reproductive care.

Since the fall of Roe, we have helped hundreds of young people travel out of Texas for abortion care in states where it is still legal. We also provide doula and financial support for young people seeking to continue their pregnancy, and operate a repro kit delivery program that confidentially delivers free emergency contraception, pregnancy tests, and safe sex resources to young people in rural areas in TX. Finally, we operate a hotline/textline that young people can access 7 days a week, to answer questions and navigate resources around birth control and STI testing/treatment. In 2024, we had 3,010 calls to our hotline, 3,432 texts to our textline, 68 cases of teens traveling out of state for abortion care, and distributed 5,402 repro kits.

One thing is very clear in our work for young people in Texas: they are afraid and confused when it comes to their reproductive rights. A survey we conducted with PENTA of 100 girls under the age of 18 in Texas, found that while 77% of respondents reported that information on

their reproductive rights are important to them, only 49% reported understanding what those rights were. Fewer than one-in-three teens reported being confident in their ability to get information on reproductive care or in their understanding of what options were available. Feelings of shame, embarrassment, and privacy concerns are top barriers that prevent teens from seeking information and care - with 63% of young people reporting they wanted information but did not ask because of these concerns, with another 40% saying the same about their fear of parental involvement.

This research was further corroborated by a report released by Resound Research and Rice University's Baker Institute that found: 1 in 5 Texas high school students are sexually active. Among them, only 27% used a highly effective contraceptive method during their last sexual encounter; while 16% used no method at all. Texas has one of the highest teen birth rates in the country that has risen since the overturning of *Roe vs. Wade*. Teens who fear confidentiality breaches are less likely to seek care—even when they want contraception. Young people are confused, embarrassed, and even scared when it comes to accessing contraception--and it's on us to fix that.

While these statistics are devastating, they do little to speak to the harm of what these bans and the chilling effect looks like on the ground. Our incredible youth fellow coordinator and former JDP client, HK Gray, gave permission to share her story that highlights exactly what this means for young people on the ground - I'm honored to share her story here with you on her behalf: "in 2017, I was a brand new teen mom and had found myself pregnant again. Months prior, I was unable to get the birth control that both my doctor and I agreed was the best fit for me because I was a de facto orphan who couldn't get written parental consent. I knew I wanted to have an abortion and I went through a lengthy judicial bypass process with the help of JDP in order to finally be able to consent to my own procedure. After all of that I didn't even have half of what it cost to have an abortion. The longer the judicial bypass took, the more expensive my procedure became and by the end of it all I just didn't have enough money saved to afford an abortion. If it wasn't for JDP and TEA Fund coming together to pay for it, I would have been forced to carry that pregnancy to term. This would have drastically reduced the quality of life I was providing for my daughter and brought us under the poverty line all before I reached the age of 18. I should have had access to birth control and abortion care but instead they left me to figure it out on my own."

The legal landscape around contraception for young people has only been further complicated since HK was denied birth control. In 1998, Texas passed a law requiring people under the age of 18 to get a parent or guardian's consent to access FDA-approved contraceptives, including the birth control pill. In 2022, the Fifth Circuit further limited that access through the *Deanda v. Becerra* decision - which prevents young people from accessing prescription contraception from a Title X clinic without parental consent. This coupled with the existing landscape and combined with the strict abortion restrictions and abstinence first sex education mandates - creates a system that is nearly impossible to navigate for young people seeking access to information and resources on contraception, pregnancy, and abortion care. Young people, particularly young parents under 18, are often told that while they have full decision making over the

medical care for their child, they are limited in the decisions they can make over their own medical autonomy.

In the latest legislative session, rather than acknowledging the harm of forced parental consent for reproductive care, TX legislators doubled down and attempted to push SB 2352 in addition to several other harmful restrictions on reproductive care - which would have banned practical support for minors without parental consent. Young people are often used as a litmus test to determine what restrictions forced birth extremists can push everywhere for everybody, and attacks on birth control and practical support are no different. No one should be denied access to necessary reproductive care, including contraception, because of their age or zip code.

At Jane's Due Process, we are not only providing direct services in real time to the young people of Texas, but we are fighting to undo the harm of these policies through bold, proactive legislation like the My Body, My Future Act, which would ensure young people are able to consent to their own contraceptive care.

Thank you for having me here today and I look forward to your questions.