

Amelia Bonow:

All right, let's get into it. Hi everybody. My name is Amelia Bonow. I use she/her pronouns and I am the Executive Director of Shout Your Abortion. SYA is a nationwide organization working to normalize abortion, and elevate paths to access regardless of legality. We make resources, campaigns, and media intended to arm existing activists, create new ones, and foster collective participation in abortion access all over the country. Abortion Academy is a monthly webinar series where we talk to one, or in this case two of our brilliant colleagues, who will take a deeper dive into their particular area of expertise. These sessions are for anybody who's looking to deepen their knowledge, connect dots between issues happening at the regional, national, and international levels, or just get some fresh ideas to take back into your community.

Audience members will be off camera and muted for security reasons throughout the session, but you will be able to ask questions in the chat. And we're going to hear from Katie and Deb for, I don't know, maybe a combined 30-ish minutes, give or take, and then we'll have a Q&A session and a convo. And we do also have live Spanish translation available. Shout out Maria and Diana. So if you want to use that, you can go to the globe icon in the lower right of your Zoom bar, and just select the language that you'd like to listen in today.

So today we're talking about young people and abortion, and I'm so glad that we are. Because I was just telling Deb and Katie, I feel like I have a lot to learn about this particular subject. I think it is fairly specified. You know what I mean? Young people face unique barriers to access, both in terms of policy and regulations, and also in terms of the particular situations they may be in. I think that also our country, our culture is not super comfortable with young people having sex. And I think that also, I think that being supportive, knowing how to support young people, it's a specified thing, considering all of those unique issues.

So I'm really looking forward to hearing from both of our guests and learning some stuff about how, as an abortion supporter, I can potentially support a young person who needs an abortion, and how to better talk about youth and abortion access. So our two guests, our first presenter is Katie Bailey, who is Youth Access Council. That's a lawyer title, at If When How. Shout out to If When How who provides so much support to so many folks in the movement for abortion access, we are so grateful that they exist. And Katie works at If When How to expand support for and eliminate barriers to young people's access to abortion through public education, messaging and policy efforts.

Prior to joining If When How, Katie was Director of Legislative Affairs and Associate General Council at Planned Parenthood Great Plains and Planned Parenthood Great Plains Votes, which is a four state affiliate of Planned Parenthood. And Deb, Deb Coffey is a Southeast Lead for Advocates for Youth Abortion Support Collective, which is a space where youth between the ages of 14 and 24 can advocate for abortion access in their communities. And they help youth in Southeastern states such as South Carolina, Tennessee, Mississippi, Kentucky, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Texas, Arkansas, and Louisiana to get involved in abortion and reproductive justice work. So we are so grateful to hear from both of you and excited for this convo, and I'm just going to hand it off to Katie first.

Katie:

Can y'all see my screen?

Amelia Bonow:

Yes.

Katie:

Perfect. Hi, everyone. Thank you all so much for joining today. I'm so excited to be here for all of the reasons that Amelia said. Again, I'm Katie. I use she/her pronouns. I'm a proud Midwesterner. I'm joining y'all from Kansas City, Missouri today where I'm born and raised, and where I've been working on abortion access. There's been a lot happening in Missouri, as y'all might know. Honestly, that could fill its own presentation. So I started in this position with If When How a year ago. And again, that was after I worked at the Planned Parenthood affiliate in four states, Kansas, Missouri, Arkansas, and Oklahoma, right after Dobbs and two of those states... Well, actually all four have a forced parental involvement law, which we'll be talking about today. But two of those states, Arkansas and Oklahoma, abortion is completely banned. And up until recently, until we voted for overturning the ban, Missouri was also banned.

And so I really was working on this in Kansas, and seeing directly the harm that forced parental involvement laws are causing young people. And I was really drawn to working specifically on youth access for a couple of reasons. And it really goes back to what Amelia was saying at the start of this, which is it felt even amongst people who support abortion or even amongst our movement, youth access was and still quite frankly is, a topic that's either not talked about at all, or it can be really tricky for folks or feel tricky for folks. So I'm really excited just to have this opportunity and to talk with y'all today.

And then the second reason being that I genuinely do not see how we can get to the future that we're all fighting so hard for, where everybody can access the abortion that they need or want, and where we all have bodily autonomy and are able to exercise that, without investing in the work to create serious culture shift around youth access specifically. And to affirm young people's ability to consent to their own care. I just don't see that happening without doing that work. And I think we've seen that in the past few decades, even when Roe was here. So I'm just really, really grateful for the opportunity to chat with y'all today.

I will very, very briefly go through If When How for folks who are unfamiliar, we are a legal services organization, a 501C3 of lawyers and advocates that work to address reproductive oppression and eliminate it. And really we do this through the lens of being in service to reproductive justice framework, and the belief that everyone should be able to determine if, when, and how to build their family, start their families, if they want to have children, build their families, whatever that will look like for them, without barriers or punishment.

So how do we do that? What does our work look like? We work directly with those who are facing or have been harmed by reproductive oppression, policing or surveillance of pregnant

bodies, through immediate wraparound legal support. And so what does that mean? We are probably most well known for our repro legal helpline, and that is a helpline where anyone can call and get free and confidential legal support, whether that's someone who's facing an immediate legal emergency, or if they just have a question about what their state law is, because it's always changing and it's very confusing even for attorneys. And I'll plug a little bit more information about our helpline in a second, but that's probably what we're most well known for.

But we also have a Repro Legal Defense Fund. And this is a pregnancy and abortion legal defense fund that provides financial support to folks to prevent criminalization, but also to support folks who are facing charges, or may be incarcerated to pay bail or bond. And just really anything that they need to give them a chance to, again, prevent that criminalization from happening in the first place, or if it is happening, help them fight it and fight their charges. And then we have a robust litigation team that works criminal defense and civil litigation for people who are impacted by state violence that they experience due to their pregnancy, loss of a pregnancy, birthing outcomes. And because of this direct work with clients, that's really what we center everything else in.

And so we are looking to build a movement. We engage in organizing to eliminate the restrictions and barriers that impact those clients that we serve, and help meet the needs of people experiencing reproductive oppression. And we really understand the importance of, and engage in public education to help shift the public narrative to, we have a research team that conducts research to help support all of these efforts, the legal services, public education, and then the policy work that we do, which is mostly what I'm going to be talking about today, which is the policy team. That's the team that I sit on.

And we rely on the experience with clients to inform our policy work, and to repeal and reform state laws if possible, if reform is possible, laws that have been misused to criminalize people for their pregnancy outcomes, including those related to youth access. And again, I told you I was going to plug our helpline. Anyone who needs to contact us can reach us at reprolegalhelpline.org, which a link will be dropped in the chat if it hasn't already, and it will also be included in the links that are sent out after this. We also have our phone number on here, so you can call or text the helpline. And I will note that the helpline is available in the caller's primary language if you call. And I believe our website can be available in Spanish, English, and Chinese. And also there's no age limit for callers.

So one of the things that you can do if you are supporting young people who may need an abortion, or you know someone who needs an abortion, they're confused about their state laws, again, because they're always changing, and because they're just confusing anyways, there's no age limit for our callers. So please pass along our helpline information. We take calls from people of all ages, including young people under 18 who are trying to figure out how to navigate the forced parental involvement laws in their states, or maybe seeking a judicial bypass, which we'll talk about, and need to be connected to an attorney to help them throughout that process. And again, that work and experience with young people, it's in all 50 states, so whatever state

you're in, a young person can call. That work really helps us inform our policy work, and has really helped us center what our ultimate goal is, which is for young people to have meaningful access.

And what does that mean? Meaningful access to the care, information and resources they need. It means that they have the right, young people like all people, should have the right to consent to care or to refuse care. It means they can do that with the support of the people that they trust. It's not the government telling them who is important to them in their lives, which adults they can go to. It's with who they trust, and it's without the threat of state violence to either themselves or their loved ones. And we know young people need and deserve access to comprehensive, confidential, reproductive healthcare. And because of decades of research and lived experience, we know delayed or denied care is harmful to young people and their health, safety, and wellbeing.

But as I mentioned at the top of this, and Amelia mentioned at the top of this, young people continue to be left behind in the fight for abortion access, and it's more important than ever, although it's always been important that we prioritize and center young people's right to reproductive freedom, especially as we're starting to see these renewed attacks on young people's bodily autonomy, including laws that criminalize the adults seeking to support them. Because these laws are really meant to be a stepping stone in an incremental way. And we saw this with Roe, where they can ban something for young people starting with young people, and then move to banning it or restricting it for everyone. And that includes litigation aimed at presenting young people's access to contraception care, to forced parental involvement laws themselves.

And so I keep using this term forced parental involvement laws. Some of y'all may be familiar with it and some of you may not. So I'm just going to do a really brief overview. That there are 38 states that currently have a forced parental involvement law on the books, and 25 of those states are states where abortion is not entirely banned. And so a forced parental involvement law is a law that requires a young person under the age of 18, although there are some states where it's under 16 or under 17, but typically under 18, to either notify or obtain parental consent, consent from a parent or a legal guardian, and then sometimes the states will have another state-sanctioned adult, but typically a parent or legal guardian before they can get an abortion.

So as I mentioned, there's two types of these laws. The first is the parental consent. This is the law that will require explicit written consent, sometimes notarized, from the parent, the explicit okay that the young person can get an abortion. And the other is parental notification. And that is where instead of the explicit consent, a parent has to be notified within a timeframe in advance of the abortion. So that's typically 24 to 48 hours depending on the state, just about the abortion. And so there's this narrative that parental notification isn't as onerous or burdensome as parental consent, because it doesn't require the explicit okay. The parent just has to know about the abortion, but they don't have to say, "Yes, you can do it or no, you can't." So the idea is that they don't have as much power to say no.

But we just very recently released a joint research report with the Human Rights Watch over the last year looking at six states that have parental notification laws in which abortion is not entirely banned. And these range from states that are more protective to abortion like Delaware and Colorado, to states that are more restrictive, and actually became more restrictive throughout the research and writing of the report, Georgia and Iowa, and then Montana and New Hampshire to look at specifically parental notification. Because there's been a lot of research on parental consent and the harms, but we were curious if the harms were still the same for parental notification. And it's probably not a surprise to most of you that they are the same, and that actually parental notification functions very similarly, pretty much the same as parental consent. And that is because when parents are notified and they do not want their young person to be able to obtain an abortion, they can do things like withholding financial support, restricting movement or access to communication to call and make an appointment, or transportation to get to the appointment, or threaten life altering consequences.

If you get the abortion, I'm going to kick you out of the house. That can effectively block a young person's access to abortion care, even if it's only notice and not consent. And what's important to know for both of these laws and states with both of these laws, the majority of young people do involve a parent in their abortion decision. And when they don't, they have good reasons for not doing so. And those reasons are rooted in their own safety and wellbeing and relationship management, managing the familial relationship. It's very interesting. A lot of times we'll hear these laws are about familial integrity, and making sure there's a relationship and communication happening. Well, sometimes young people don't want to tell a parent or a guardian, because they don't want to disrupt what existing familial harmony they have. And sometimes telling them and involving them in their abortion decision-making can do that.

And we know through research that young people are good predictors of the consequences of involving their parents, and whether they will be supportive or not supportive, and what the harms of doing that will be. And so it's really coming down to we need to trust young people because they know their lives, they know themselves and they know their relationships, and the state doesn't, the legislators do not, and they can't be the ones who decide who is safe for a young person to turn to or not, when they're making a big life decision such as what to do with their pregnancy. And it's important to know these laws restrict access.

They're burdensome even when they're working, I'm putting that in quotes, even when they're working as they're supposed to, even when a young person does involve a parent, it's still a burden to have to go to the clinic, sign, get the form notarized, all of these extra additional things that come along with abortion exceptionalism, and it leads to delays in care research has shown, again, whether a young person is able to involve a parent or not, or whether they're able to go to a judge. And so most states with forced parental involvement laws also have what is known as judicial bypass. This is a process where if a young person who cannot involve a parent or guardian, they need an abortion, they can go to a judge to ask them if they will waive the consent or notification requirement in order for the... And really they have to file a petition and ask the judge.

And in order for the judge to grant the bypass, they must find that the young person is either, one, sufficiently mature enough to have an abortion without involving their parent or guardian, or they're well enough informed. And what does that mean? Well, that's really the question, because there really is not a set standard for what the judge is going to be considering. And so it gives the judge an enormous amount of power to determine how to evaluate a young person's maturity, or whether parental notification or the abortion is in their best interest, what information they can consider.

So typically the young person will file a petition with the court, and they will have to either go to a court, some are virtual for a hearing. But you still have to think no matter what, court hearings are probably occurring during the school day or the workday. You have to take off work, you have to arrange. If you're a young person that is trying to conduct this virtually, you have to have the technology to do so. You have to make sure you're in a confidential spot. If it's going to the courthouse, you have to try to figure out how you're going to get there, how are you going to get off school or off work in order to go to the hearing? Will people see you?

Most non-attorneys or non-legal people do not interact with the courts, except for in circumstances that are typically negative. Maybe they're going there because they've had something happening with the criminal justice system or something. And so they're going to this court, and they may have already negative idea about, "Oh, I'm going to court. I'm in trouble." And that's what most people think. And so they have to go in front of the judge, and like I said, the judge can ask whatever they want. So if you get an anti-abortion judge, they can put their bias right in there. They will ask questions, even non-biased, the most non-biased judge, they will ask very invasive questions, because they're going to be asking you, "Why can't you tell your parents? Why don't you want to involve your parent or guardian? What does your familial relationships look like? Do you have a partner? What is your relationship status? Have you told your partner about the abortion? What are your grades? What is your work experience? Where are you living? What are your future plans?"

You're really putting a young person under a microscope, and they have to disclose the most intimate parts of their lives and details of their lives to a stranger for them to determine, can they get an abortion or not? And honestly, thinking about it as an adult, I'm like, I don't want to go in front of a judge and have to answer all of these questions myself. And so it's just intimidating, it's stigmatizing the entire process, and that's inherent in the process. And judicial bypass is actually a constitutional requirement that emerged in cases at the US Supreme Court when Roe vs. Wade was in effect. And so the Supreme Court was reviewing forced parental involvement laws that have been passed by state, and they actually found under Roe, young people under 18, not just adults, had a federal constitutional right to abortion. And because of this, the laws that required that forced parental involvement were unconstitutional, because they gave parents the ability to veto a young person's decision to have an abortion.

The Supreme Court heard multiple cases, and ultimately established that in order for forced parental consent law to be constitutionally permissible under Roe, there had to be an alternative

mechanism where the young person could get an abortion if their parent refused, or wasn't unable to provide consent or be involved, and that alternative procedure became judicial bypass. But the Dobbs decision, as we know, overturned Roe, so there's no longer a constitutionally protected right to abortion for anyone, let alone young people. But the interesting thing is it didn't directly overturn the cases and precedent around young people that are based on Roe, and that state judicial bypass is required.

And so we know anti-abortion advocates want to get the specific issue back up to the Supreme Court, and they have the ultimate goal of getting it to the Supreme Court, and having the Supreme Court say states are fined to require parental consent and involvement for all young people with no judicial bypass. And we've seen states, most recently South Carolina, file legislation to repeal their judicial bypass provision while keeping the parental involvement law on the books. This bill just died this week, but that was something that was being considered in the mega bill in South Carolina. And it's an interesting position, because we have spent years talking about how inherently problematic judicial bypass is, that it's not a reasonable alternative for young people, but it is an important option for young people who cannot involve their parent or guardian in states that have forced parental involvement laws.

And so I think this really goes to the point that in order to truly protect young people and eliminate the harm for them, we have to get rid of these laws altogether. Because we are really looking at a future in the near future, where young people are forced to get their parental consent or notification with no option for judicial bypass. And this is really going to impact the young people who are unhoused, who are in foster care, who are facing really serious situations in their home. Maybe it's abuse or neglect, and maybe they don't have contact with the parent. The most vulnerable young people who use judicial bypass, are the ones who are going to be the most harmed and won't be able to access abortion at all.

So just really quickly looking at where we're at state by state, some states have only parental consent laws, some state has only parental notification, and some require both notification and consent from a parent or guardian, including Florida, which Deb will be talking about. This is the current map as of yesterday, November 19th, and the states in dark blue are states that where abortion is banned, the states in the medium blue are states that have a parental involvement law, and the states in the lighter blue are states where abortion is generally accessible for young people. I will say, fortunately, we are seeing efforts to repeal these laws. Illinois was the first state to successfully repeal their forced parental notification law in 2020, so young people are now able to get an abortion in the state without being required to involve their parent. But we are also seeing some not so great things.

Earlier this year, we saw a parental notification law go into effect in Nevada for the very first time ever, that was actually passed in 1985. It was enjoined before it ever went into effect in the federal court under Roe. Once Roe fell, anti-abortion attorneys revived the case and said the grounds for the injunction didn't exist anymore because the grounds were Roe. And now for the first time ever, I think it was in July, young people under 18 in Nevada have to notify a parent or guardian, or get a judicial bypass before they can access abortion. I think that makes a very big

case for why repeal is important. Even if you are able to successfully litigate and get an injunction against one of these laws, things can change, and the laws can go back into effect as we've been seeing in Nevada.

Again, no matter the state and no matter the political landscape, forced parental involvement laws are a major barrier. And even in states that have taken steps after Dobbs to increase access to abortion with things like shield laws, removing barriers like prohibiting that Medicaid can pay for abortion, or states that have passed constitutional amendments to put the right to an abortion or reproductive healthcare in state constitutions, there has not still been a lot of progress on youth access to abortion, and we continue to see these restrictions on the books in states that consider themselves very protective of abortion and have historically been, or have been working to be after Roe fell.

I will say we have seen some successful legal challenges also brought against forced parental involvement laws, and this includes most recently in Montana where a legal challenge to their forced parental consent law went up to the Montana Supreme Court, who held that it was a violation of young people's right to privacy under the Montana State Constitution versus the Federal Constitution. Montana does still have a parental notification law, and that is also being challenged. And so how could we eliminate these laws? As I mentioned, so even in states with progressive abortion policies, these laws are still in effect. And even if the process is working, let's say every person can involve their parent or guardian safely, or there's no judicial bypass denials, because sometimes, I failed to mention our judges do have bias, they are human, and they will deny a request for judicial bypass.

And let's say we're in a state where that's not happening, there's no denials. It's still a problem because there's still delay, and the process itself to get parental consent to have to disclose this, if you otherwise wouldn't. Even if it's safe, even if it's just somebody it's forcing you to tell someone as a young person that maybe you don't want to tell, is traumatizing, and it's punishment through the process itself. But we also know in many places the process is just not working, or rather it is working in the way that it's intended to by the folks who push these laws, which is to be a barrier to abortion access, and really a way to normalize abortion restrictions.

So now we're going to move to, in recent years, we've seen legislators in several states move to enact legislation to impose civil or criminal punishment on those who support or help young people under 18 as they seek abortion care. And this really ties into the forced parental involvement laws, because the underlying narrative is the same. It's that young people aren't capable of making their own decisions, knowing what's right for them and who is their best support. And this is the same narrative we're seeing continually used to further restrict and chip away young people's access, and that's with the ultimate goal of eliminating access to abortion for everyone.

So bans on abortion support are bans that seek to stop access to abortion care by punishing things like helping someone travel for an abortion, helping someone get an appointment for an abortion, helping someone get pills that could be used to induce an abortion. And it's really

targeting the supportive adult to create a chilling effect. Because they ultimately want to make the young person fear reaching out to ask for help if it's not their parent or legal guardian, because they want to make them afraid that if they do that, if they reach out and say, "Hey, I'm thinking about an abortion, you're somebody I trust, you're somebody who's supported me in the past." That there could be criminal or civil liability for doing that. And so that's really one of the biggest harms of these laws is just the chilling effect that they create. But what do they look like?

So we've had two states, Idaho and Tennessee, who have enacted these laws, which are currently being challenged, both are being challenged, and which at least some part of both laws have already been found unconstitutional. But typically these laws will have language like recruit, making it illegal to recruit, harbor, or transport a pregnant person either in the state or out of the state for an abortion, sometimes without explicit parental consent. Right now, legislation is being considered in New Hampshire that would not only ban abortion support, but also prohibit the transportation of a young person under 18 for any surgical procedure without written, notarized parental consent. So if I texted a young person, my child's aunt and I said, "Hey, could you drop them off for surgery? I have to work." Or something, that's not going to cut it because it has to be notarized.

Another variation of a ban on abortion support was introduced in Colorado. This was the first that I've seen that was attempting to target both abortion and gender-affirming care, specifically targeting those who support young people coming from out of state into Colorado to access either. And you'll hear me say this multiple times, but the tactic is not new. For example, in 2024, we saw Project Veritas, the organization that's known for secretly recording and editing videos against abortion providers, doctored videos from visits to a Missouri Planned Parenthood to create allegations that Planned Parenthood was secretly transporting minors out of state for abortions to bypass their parents.

Although there's no evidence to substantiate these claims, the video itself was enough for the then anti-abortion Missouri Attorney General, Andrew Bailey, who's now in the federal government, used the video to file a lawsuit against Planned Parenthood, alleging they were violating a 2005 law that prohibits aiding and abetting a young person to obtain an abortion without the consent of their parents or without going through judicial bypass. And this all came out ahead of the 2024 vote on the amendment to add protections for reproductive freedom to the State Constitution. So we can really see what the aim was with that and creating that narrative. And that's really what this is. This is about a narrative.

Anti-abortion policymakers are calling these bills abortion trafficking. We would urge you to stay away from that language because that is the anti-language. And they're using those specific phrases, recruit, harbor, transport because they're terms that are used when talking about trafficking, when talking about real human trafficking and in real human trafficking law. But abortion trafficking does not exist. It's made up by the anti-abortion movement, and it's appropriating that language because it's language we associate with harm, and they're trying to incite fear and isolate people who are seeking an abortion from those who support them. And these laws, the bans on abortion support, do nothing to protect young people just like forced

parental involvement laws. You will hear them say that it does, but it doesn't. It deters pregnant people from seeking services and the support that they need, out of fear.

So it's really important that we create a public understanding of this tactic, and we can do that by sharing accurate information, creating public awareness, and developing a collective understanding of what this is, and that we're not going to use the term abortion trafficking, so that we can better fight these bans targeting young people and their support network. And so we've created a toolkit for folks to use that has sample, I think, social media messages. There's a guide for journalists, there's messaging guidance, legislator guidance that'll all be sent out after this, and a link I think is going to be dropped in the chat. And as we head into the start of legislative sessions, if you're in a state and you see a ban on abortion support introduced, or if you have questions if one's been introduced, please, please, please feel free to reach out because we're working really hard to stop these before anymore go into effect.

And again, these tactics are not new. They come from the same tired anti-abortion playbook with one purpose, and that is to ban and prevent access to abortion nationwide. And we're seeing this again with the weaponization of parental rights to undermine and attack youth access. I'm telling you, this could be its own presentation because Deb and I actually have presented on this, and it could go on for two hours. So I will go through this as quickly as possible to get to what Deb is going to say next, but there's a lot of information here. And so again, if you would like to chat more about parental rights and how it's being used, please, please, please feel free to reach out.

So the most important thing, the parental rights movement they may hear about, it may look local, it may look organic. Maybe this is just a group of local parents who have gotten together because they're concerned about what's happening at their kids' schools, or what's happening at their kids' doctor's office. It's important to know, this is not organic nor local. This is very well-funded and very well organized at the federal, state and local level. There are big players who are behind this movement, and when you start peeling back the layers and seeing how connected it all is, it can initially be pretty overwhelming. But on the flip side, once you do that, you realize that what is seemingly a lot of small individual fights, like attacks on gender-affirming care, attacks on abortion, which many of us here who are spending our time at this Abortion Academy care deeply about, and understand how these attacks are linked, but even broader attacks like book bans in schools, bans on preferred pronouns, bathrooms, attacks on trans students, attacks on vaccines.

You'll start to see how these are all related, and they're all connected at the root, and the very same advocates and organizations that are pushing bans on abortion, bans on abortion support, forced parental involvement laws, Project 2025, they are all pushing this as well. And this allows us to zoom out and see the bigger picture to highlight what their ultimate goal is, and also to work inter-sectionally and across states, because we have to, because they are doing that. And it's very important that we do that, and across issue areas. Because the fight can feel really big and lonely at the micro level, but knowing the history of parental rights, how it's showing up and the macro level can really help us build a stronger resistance.

And so just very quickly, I'm going to go through, there's four tactics that we can think about how this shows up. Its attempts to pass legislation, things like the Parental Bill of Rights. There's a foundation called the Parental Rights Foundation. They have a model parental rights amendment, and they have the goal of getting parental rights added as an explicit right to the US Constitution. This group and the organizations that work with them, they were successful just very recently. A few weeks ago, Texas was the very first state to pass a Parental Bill of Rights into their state constitution. So we're yet to see how that's going to turn out, but there were even conservatives who were coming out against it because it's so vague, it's so broad. It gives the state so much power to determine who is a parent, and what rights does that parent have to direct the care, custody, and control of their young person, as well as these fundamental parental rights statutes, the American Legislative Exchange Council, folks who worked in policy may know them as Alec, has been adopted by them, their conservative lobbyist group to push in states.

And we've seen the real harm of these. I know Deb will be talking about what's been going on in Florida. In 2024, Idaho passed a broad Parental Bill of Rights, which essentially prohibited young people under the age of 18 from consenting to any healthcare at all on their own, unless there was an emergency or court order. And for any other treatment, written consent from a parent is required. Since that's passed, the negative consequences have already become clear. Young people are not able to access the services of crisis and suicide hotlines because they don't have written parental consent when they were experiencing a mental health crisis. Ironically, when the Idaho Governor signed the law in the letter about his signing, he anticipated negative consequences.

It says, "I urge all stakeholders to closely monitor any negative consequences this legislation has on our youth accessing the behavioral health supports they need. In the event this bill creates any unintended barriers for adolescent behavioral health, I expect amendments will be made to address the issue accordingly." One year later this past session, legislators returned to attempt to introduce legislation to fix some of the issues caused by this. Some of what they were wanting to fix or clarify is that the law did not include exceptions for emancipated minors. Minors who have gone through the court system and said they are separated from their parents. They have the legal capacity, a court has said that, to consent, and they're treated as an adult. It does not have any exemption for that. They weren't able to pass anything, and so the law currently as is.

Litigation, again, devil beginning into this. There was a devastating decision from Florida's Fifth District, essentially eliminating judicial bypass process under parental rights. There's also a concerted effort of the anti-abortion movement to get a case up to the US Supreme Court, and we saw this in Montana. The Montana Attorney General in the win that I spoke about earlier in Montana, the Attorney General attempted to appeal that state Supreme Court decision protecting young people to the US Supreme Court, alleging the Montana Supreme Court's ruling violated federal constitutional parental rights. For now, SCOTUS declined taking up the case, but we had two justices, Justice Alito and Justice Thomas, probably not very much of a surprise,

that were ready and wrote separately to say they would love to hear a case like that. So we'll see.

And we're also seeing anti-abortion advocates drum up sham investigations like the one I was talking about in Missouri. There was something similar happening in Virginia with a school, a blogger alleged an employee in Fairfax, Virginia assisted two high school students with getting abortions without parental consent. An initial investigation by the school and a law firm that was looking into it for the schools said that that was not true, but the anti-abortion advocacy groups and conservative media took the allegations and ran with them. This has led the Virginia Governor to open a state criminal investigation. It has led the US Department of Education, the US Senate Health Education, Labor and Pensions Committee to launch investigations.

All of this was coming ahead of the elections this fall, where Virginians did vote for a new Governor and decided that Democrats will keep their slim majority in the House, but it was also on the heels of their work they're doing to pass a proposed constitutional amendment. So we've definitely seen this utilized consistently as part of an effort to defeat ballot measures, which I could also talk about forever. So if anyone's interested in that, again, reach out to me. And yeah, it's all about shaping the public narrative, and they'll try it anywhere. So I will turn it over to Deb to talk about what y'all are seeing in Florida.

Deborah Coffy:

Sorry, I was on mute, but thank you so much, Katie, for really sharing just crucial information about the abortion landscape and honestly, what's going on with judicial bypass throughout the country. Is Shout Your Abortion ready to show my slides? Awesome. So hi everyone. My name is Deb Coffy. I know Amelia introduced me a little bit earlier on. Next slide, please. So yes, again, my name's Deb Coffy, pronouns are they/she. Wanted to be a little bit fun and include my cancer sign, Pisces Moon, Sag Rising, of course, but I've been organizing for a very long time. Since I was really young, my parents really shared with me about politics at such a young age, and I would discuss them a lot with my dad when he was getting ready for work, and helping me get ready for school. And my mom used to work as a Domestic Advocate at a domestic violence shelter in Western Pennsylvania.

I increased within my involvement within politics and social justice when I was in college at the University of Central Florida, Go Knights [inaudible 00:42:11], and I got involved. So I got involved with a lot of organizations such as National Organization for Women. I did a communications fellowship with Ruth's List, which focuses on electing pro democratic and pro-choice women throughout the state of Florida. And some of the other organizations are listed on the slide here. Not going to go through my whole resume, of course, just to be respectful of time and just to educate y'all. But next slide.

So Advocates for Youth, which is who I'm representing today, I am a Southeast Co-lead for the Abortion Support Collective for Youth. And Advocates for Youth in general focuses on partnering with young people and their adult allies to champion young rights and youth rights to bodily

autonomy, and to build power to transform policies, programs, and systems to secure sexual health and equity for all youth. Next slide.

So these are a few things that Advocates for Youth focuses on. So both birth control access and sexual health services, abortion access and reproductive justice, LGBTQ+ health and rights, HIV and AIDS advocacy, support for sexual assault survivors and racial justice. That's not everything that we do and there's a lot of different intersections, but those are our core things that we have. And we have a lot of different work groups, advisory boards, and just opportunities for youth to get involved. Next slide.

So for what I'm representing today specifically, our Youth Abortion Support Collective, it was birthed out of the fall of Roe and the overturn of Roe, unfortunately with that. And as we know, Roe was never the ceiling. It honestly was the floor, and there has been a lot of injustice when it comes to abortion access. We know about the Hyde Amendment, and we also know about the different things that exist with restricting Medicaid and Medicare for people who need access to abortion. So we know that the fight for abortion access has been a long time coming, and the overturn of Roe, and even when Roe existed, was not the final lines for that.

So with Roe being overturned, Advocates for Youth decided to build the Abortion Support Collective so that youth can be involved, is for those between the ages of 14 and 24. We have 10 regions representing the country. So I represent the Southeast and some other Southern states such as Arkansas, Texas, and Oklahoma. And through our advocacy, we're able to really focus on spreading awareness about the landscape. We know that within the South in particular, there's a lot of abortion bans and restrictions. So getting the word out, creating zines, creating social media posts, sharing trainings, sharing resources so that youth, whether they're in high school or middle school, or whether they're in college or have already graduated from college, they have the ability to share and spread knowledge among their peers. And there's a lot of power in that. I think that youth, we're able to recognize how to get out to our peers, to our friends and community members.

So this collective does just that. We have over 1,200 members, and we continue to grow and look for different ways and avenues to reach out to other folks. And we just got started with having our Co-lead program last year, but each region is represented by about one to two Co-leads. Next slide.

So why Youth and Reproductive justice? I think obviously youth are people too. Youth deserve to have access to reproductive health and comprehensive sex ed. And when we push away and try to utilize youth as a tool to push agendas, which is what we often see by anti-abortion activists, we remove the autonomy that youth deserve to have. Next slide. So for one, youth or young people are deserving of bodily autonomy, access, and empowerment to determine their futures. And like adults, young people have the right to accurate sex education, abortion access, and decide whom they want to have relationships with, or build their families with, when and if they choose to do so. Next slide.

So within this little graphic, which is from the Reproductive Rights website, it really showcases our landscape when it comes to abortion access. And as you can see, the region that I represent, which is basically the South, you see a lot of hostile or you see a lot of illegal. And before the fall and after Roe, and before Roe and during Roe, different states have passed legislation severely limiting sex education and abortion access, and doing so has only led to the increase of STI and STD rates. And we know that with talking about sex, that's not going to impact or increase youth having sex. We know that giving the correct information for sex, and giving the correct information to abortion access helps them be equipped. And we know that youth, they also struggle with a lot of different things.

So with these bans being in place, being able to travel, or dealing with legislation such as what's been passed in Idaho or Tennessee, we see that these things just create more barriers towards youth. And there's been increased cost of travel for youth who come from states that have bans or limited abortion access. So only five states require comprehensive sex education from K through 12, and that's really only 10% out of all states in the United States. So in the South itself, we also have to remember there's a lot of people of color, especially Black people. There's a large percentage of people who identify or who are part of the LGBTQ+ community.

We know that here in Florida, it has the second-largest transgender community in the country. And within the South, there's a lot of political repression. A lot of people love to dig on the South. A lot of people love to say, "Let's cut the South off, or even Florida." And those are terms of rhetoric that's not really helpful towards our movement. There's a lot of political repression, there's a lot of suppression, and voting patterns that have been pushed to limit the voices of people who are on the ground fighting to build a better future for abortion access, but for many other crucial issues that impact folks and that impact young people as well. So next slide.

So laws and their impacts. So I can go into this for so many hours. There are just so many laws, there are so many groups that have really been targeting youth, and been targeting people when it comes to limiting abortion access, limiting protective and very useful repro laws. But I'm going to focus on three states a little bit, and I can talk about Florida for so long, but I wanted to mention South Carolina, Florida, and Texas. So South Carolina, there's the Unborn Child Protection Act. And if passed, it'd be the strictest abortion ban in the nation.

So what's really important to note here is that if someone gets an abortion and someone supports them, so friends, community members, activists, organizers, providers, doulas, et cetera, they can face up to 30 years in prison for utilizing their own autonomy, for utilizing a right that they deserve to have. And within the chat, an article to this legislation will be dropped, but that's very crucial. And once again, if this is passed, this will impact not only people in South Carolina, but people around the country. We know when laws are passed, from the bottom up they go. So it wouldn't be surprising if eventually we would see this at the national level, but neighboring states could also replicate this too if this could be effective.

So within Florida, there's judicial bypass, which Katie described in such great detail earlier on. So there was a Appellate Court case where a 17-year-old petitioned to go through the bypass

option to not inform her parents. And the court ruled that judicial bypass violated parents' due process rights. It wouldn't be surprising if something like this would be replicated across different states, but judicial bypass, although not perfect, it was an option for youth and now it's become very restricted in the state of Florida. And I believe the only exception at this point is if the person who got the person pregnant was a family member or a parent, and that's still not enough. There should be more ways for youth to be able to access abortions, and this just limits that even more and causes more tensions among abortion support and among youth who need access.

And another link will be dropped in the chat regarding the repro legal helpline, discussing some of the laws that exist related to abortion in Florida. So there's Texas and there's Prop 15, which Katie also described in great detail. It was passed by almost 70%, and it states that parents have the right to exercise care, custody, and control of the parent's child, including the right to make decisions concerning the child's upbringing, and the responsibility to nurture and protect the parent's child. So obviously, this is very vague. I think we all know that. And unfortunately, from what I've noticed when I've done advocacy and when I've gone to Tallahassee myself, they make these laws vague on purpose for one to confuse folks, and to also really confuse providers and confuse people who are of need.

So for example, we have had a lot of bans that have been passed within the Florida legislature when it has come to abortion and when it's come to a lot of other things. And we defeated previously the civil liability bill that Florida tried to pass, but unfortunately with our next session that is starting up in January and the pre-committee meetings that are taking place, civil liability is back in the books again, as well as legislation that's trying to limit minors, especially those who are between the ages of 16 and 17, access to contraceptives, so birth control. So we know that these bills, whether it's through Prop 15, or through pieces of legislation that's passed within the Florida legislature or wherever, that they're vague, and it allows for less opportunities for freedom for minors and for youth who can't practice their own autonomy in cases of sexual and repro care, but also in other cases as well.

And there's two articles that'll be listed about Texas, they're an organization that really focuses on reproductive justice, and they wrote about why Prop 15 is bad and their reasonings behind it. And there's also a Substack that talks about parental rights, and the weaponization that they have utilized the vehicle of children's safety to push legislation that has really harmed children's autonomy. So next slide.

So in conclusion, for one, youth advocacy is essential. Advocates for Youth does a lot with youth with building leadership, and building opportunity for youth to empower themselves. And empowerment comes from within. So it's important for youth to have partnership and to not just be told what to do when it comes to organizing for their rights, and organizing for their bodily autonomy or other issues that impact them, whether it's through abortion access and other reproductive justice tenants and core issues, or through mental health or through other avenues. It's just really essential for us to really amplify the voices of youth, because eventually

youth become adults, and young adults become full-blown adults. And they deserve to be able to advocate for themselves and to continue that work.

So youth deserve autonomy and the ability to go through empowerment. And when we build up leaders, we then can pass the baton so that this movement can keep going. I have a few more resources that I want to share before we head over to the Q&A process. So currently, with ARC Southeast, which is an amazing abortion fund, but also reproductive justice organization that provides a lot of resources for those in the South, Advocates for Youth, ARC Southeast, the Abortion Support Collective. We're working and exploring a network of abortion doulas, and we're looking to gather some advice and knowledge from other doulas and support collectives and organizations.

So if anyone is an abortion doula, which we do provide also abortion doula training at Advocates for Youth. If you're interested, I do have my email and the slides that I can drop it within the chat. We'd be so interested in connecting with you just to build that and have a conversation sometime before the year ends, so we can just continue building a platform, and building community when it comes to abortion support. Because what we do know is that unfortunately there are a lot of far right reading groups that are trying to take advantage of those who have went through abortions, and shame them instead of having support systems for those who really need it.

Amelia Bonow:

Thank you both so much. That was incredible. You just covered so much in such a complimentary way. Did you say that you've presented multiple times together before? Twice. Yeah, that makes sense. I was like, this is a very professional. Yeah, just the way that you covered so much and tag teamed it was pretty amazing. And like I said, I think that I had not spent a ton of time hearing... I had never heard a full presentation about young people and abortion access before. And I've definitely engaged with materials, but I feel like you guys just really got deep in a way that I feel totally like my own understanding has deepened.

You both said a ton of things. So folks, if you want to ask questions, now's a great time. We're going to have a little chat, but we would love to bring in some questions from the audience if you have some. You both said so many things that stuck in my mind, and I was reflecting on... Okay, so people are really uncomfortable with young people and abortion access. And I think there's a parallel with the way that people are really uncomfortable with abortion later in pregnancy. And I also put a pin in that because I think that there's a major crossover there that we can talk about too. But I feel like in both of those situations with youth abortion access, and stuff like parental consent laws and later abortion stuff, it's like people are just uncomfortable and they think that these laws are somehow... It's a solution to their own discomfort, but it doesn't actually create a better world in any way. And it actually just creates a really fucked up reality for the people that they're under the guise of who they're supposed to be helping.

And I think that you both just talked a lot about empowering young people and your work in doing so. And I guess I would just love to hear both of you talk about, what do you wish that

people knew about young people seeking abortions? And about what it feels like to support them? Because I feel like it's all contained right there. You know what I mean?

Deborah Coffy:

So I guess I can go first. So I think for one, I think people have to recognize that young people who do seek abortions, they know what they're doing, they've done the research, they have made the decision, and that is their choice as if someone who is 30 years old needs to make that decision. They have been taken the time, whether it's through the Turnaway Project who provides a lot of resources and sharing what abortion is, or seeking out resources from our collective or wherever they went.

So I think it's important to realize that at the end of the day, we all have been young people before, and I think we all have gone through an experience where we felt, dang, that person didn't listen to me and I know what I'm talking about, I know how I feel. So I think what advice I would have for people is to bring yourself back to that moment, and use that empathy and to recognize that. And if you are uncomfortable with abortion, you don't have to get one too. So really recognize that people, they think through the decisions and those people include youth too.

Katie:

Yeah. I think just building exactly on what Deb was saying in terms of young people are capable of making the best decisions for themselves. And I think that we can really see this when we see the lengths that young people have to go through, the barriers that young people have to navigate. I constantly am thinking about it. Our recent report had the image of a maze because it's like that, everywhere you go. And this maze is ever-changing now. One day it could be this law. You think, okay, this is how I'm going to get through it, and it changes. And so it is complex. It's confusing for everybody who is seeking an abortion right now, and honestly has been, exactly what Deb was saying. Roe was not as protective as we need, what we need.

But for young people, the barriers are so much greater, and they find a way because this is the right decision for them. And so I don't see how you could say, "Hey, they're not capable of making this decision." When they are capable of making this decision, and they will go to extreme lengths to do so, and comply with these laws, and make sure that they get the care that they need and want. Yeah, I think that's probably the biggest thing.

Amelia Bonow:

Yeah. It seems like just as is the case with any other abortions, if somebody doesn't want to be pregnant, they're going to find a way to end their pregnancy. And it's just how much struggle, and stress, and just dehumanization does that person have to navigate before they're able to do that? And will it be safe and supported? Or will it be this terrible, lonely time of turmoil? But I think that it's very important to just remember that bans don't work. They just fuck with people. And so Debbie, you were saying we can all remember times that we were young, and basically young people are people, and they are still the only ones capable of making decisions about their body.

I feel also oftentimes people's aversion or just their discomfort around youth abortion might come from their own experiences, and maybe their own sexual experiences as young people. Which just to speak in the first person, because I think it's safer to do that, it's like I had sexual experiences as a young person that definitely I would've been like, "Yeah, I'm choosing this at the time." But in retrospect, I was like, that was weird or that didn't feel good. And I feel like there is an impulse from adults to protect young people from negative experiences with sex, that is coming from a good place, or it's not coming from an anti-abortion place. But again, it ultimately does not result in better outcomes for anyone.

So I guess it's a little bit of a devil's advocate thing, but I think that sometimes it's helpful to entertain those things because we're all here to in some ways get better at messaging. And so I guess I'm wondering, if someone raises a question that's basically like young people can't consent to sex, that a focus on empowering young people in this way is not contending with the idea that young people are not always in fully consensual sexual situations. And I feel like I know what you're going to say, but I just want to talk through it.

Katie:

Yeah. The first thing that comes to my mind thinking about that is, then we need to invest in comprehensive sexual education to equip young people with the tools that they need when they find themselves in a situation. And I didn't have that.

Amelia Bonow:

No.

Katie:

And I think exactly what you're hitting on in terms of a broader stigmatization or shame around teen sexuality at all. But we know teens are going to have sex, and so we need to as adults, equip them with the skills, quite frankly, to know this is what consent is. And we have anti-abortion advocates, anti-sex ed advocates that are trying to remove consent from sex ed, and it's all connected. But that's the first thing that I would say is that we know, like you said, young people are going to have sex, young people are going to get abortion. People who do not want to carry a pregnancy to term and want an abortion, will find a way to get one. And it's a matter of making sure that people have the support and the resources that they need to make the best decision for them.

Amelia Bonow:

Yeah, totally. I want to shout out one resource that I have been a fan of for a long time. It's called Scarleteen, and it's like a youth... Yeah, Scarleteen is so rad. It's a primarily peer-to-peer sex ed resource that's made by and for young people. And the creator of it, I live in Seattle, and the creator of it is a Seattle person also. Heather Carina is their name. And it's a really amazing website that I think that a lot of adults have, again, this major discomfort talking to young people about sex, because they don't want to sexualize young people either. And I think, which I think is

sort of misguided, it's this like, "Well, don't tell them about sex, or then they'll go do it." And it's like, that's literally not how that works.

But I think that one way around, or one way to help people navigate that discomfort is this peer-to-peer approach as opposed... And so yeah, check out the Scarleteen website. It's super thorough. There's tons of advice column stuff. There's just a very thorough compendium of glossary of terms and different articles, just tons of resources. Deb, did you have anything to add to that convo about holding empowerment and consent and...

Deborah Coffy:

For one, Scarleteen is amazing. So thank you for saying that. I think too, just bouncing off of that, Planned Parenthood, they have a lot of great resources too. There was this summer camp called Camp Out, that Planned Parenthood Florida did that educated youth, I believe between the ages of maybe 15 up until college age, to be able [inaudible 01:06:58] knowing about HIV, and LGBTQ+ people, and comprehensive sex ed so that they can take that information and spread it among their peers and do an online campaign. So I think what's really important is to look at the reality versus of just the theory of what is just up here. Because it's uncomfortable to talk about sex at times, especially with how is it very stigmatized within our society. But we have to look at the evidence that teenagers are having sex.

So what we should do as adults and what we should do as peers is get that real information, get that comprehensive sex ed so that they are equipped. So whether they decide to or not, they know what to do, they know what resources they can go to. And if they need that support, they can go to a trusted adult. Because like you were saying too Amelia, I feel like there is that crossover between anti-abortion activists and anti-sex education activists. So they're not only going after abortion, but they don't want that comprehensive sex ed. They don't want youth to be aware of their bodies and to know what to do. And I think it's very important to challenge that.

Amelia Bonow:

Yeah. The anti-abortion movement is not even trying to prevent abortion. If they were actually trying to prevent abortion, they would be helping people access comprehensive sex education, and birth control, and Plan B and all of these things that ostensibly lower abortion rates, but they are actually the ones that are working to suppress all of those things as well. And so we know that they're not actually about it. They're just not. And the effect of all of this together is it just creates a trap. It creates an impossible... It's like, okay, well, if I don't understand my body enough to even know how sex works or when I can get pregnant, how do people think that that's going to play out?

Yeah. I think that what you just said, Deb, about the people, the theory thing, that abortion has largely been this theoretical conversation that lacks a lot of human stories, and just people talking honestly about what this really is and how it works in their lives, how this actually shows up in society, which is that it's a normal part of life. It always has been. It always will be. It's not just tragic exceptions. It's not just these edge cases. It's a part of sexual and reproductive existence for many millions of people. And what that looks like, what it feels like. All of those

things are like, there's a huge spectrum. But at the end of the day, I feel like the setup always was just like, let's talk about this in these niche theoretical cases, and then argue this against this theory. And I think one of the reasons why storytelling type work is really valuable, is it takes stuff out of that theoretical context and is actually like, what does this look like?

So I guess I wanted to talk to you about youth storytelling or what experiences... Which is obviously a tricky thing too, because storytelling in general, whether it's through an organization, or it's to Congress, or to be leveraged in some political way, that stuff is really sensitive and it can be exploitative. And I guess I'm wondering how you see young people telling their stories as part of this movement for public education.

Deborah Coffy:

Yeah. So for one, Advocates for Youth does have an abortion storytelling training as well, and I could find resources to that and send that out to y'all, or y'all can send that out to people once I get that resource over. But yeah, I think telling your own story is really crucial. No one can take that away from you. And I think also organizations like We Testify, that allow for it to be ethical, that allow it to be, whether it's you centered or person centered. So that people can share their stories, and is not utilized in a way that is just to take and display and just run away from it. And I think really with storytelling, there is power. So it takes away that shame, it takes away that stigma that exists. Because what we do know is that unfortunately anti-abortion organizations, after someone does get an abortion, the attacks doesn't end.

They shame people, or sometimes there's tactics utilized to say, "You have to repent or you did something bad." When no, that was your decision that you needed to make. You decided to take a medical procedure that you needed for your livelihood. And there can be a plethora of feelings. And we know the Turnaway Project says the majority of folks, over 95% of folks do not regret their abortion. But if people need support, whether they're feeling joy, whether they're feeling solace, whether they feel both or in between, that's why it's so crucial for there to be resources like storytelling so that people can know they're not alone, but also support collectives that allow for people to share their stories personally too. And abortion doulas do great work with that.

I think the New York Abortion Fund, they're going to be having a support circle coming up, I think within a week or two, I can try to find that resource. It'll be online. So if you don't live in New York, you can also attend. And I know with another organization, I also do work with Peer Support Space as well as FAN, Florida Access Network. They have a collective, I think, the name is not coming on the top of my head, but I can find that resource so you all can send it out too, where it's a peer support group. And if you had an abortion, you can go there. And they vet it so that no one comes in to do anything, and you can share your story and you can share your experience. And we all know there's power in that.

Katie:

Deb said it all perfectly. The only thing I'll add is just the tension you were mentioning around the storytelling being such a crucial component of shifting the public narrative, but the existing

public narrative being one of such shame, and stigmatization, that makes it hard or difficult. And especially when you're thinking about young people who have access to abortion through a judicial bypass or something like that, it's already so traumatizing to have to share all of your information, and personal details with a stranger, the last thing that you want to do, especially if you're trying to keep it confidential from a parent or guardian. And so that's something that's tough, but I think exactly the spaces Deb was talking about are so crucial and important to creating that environment where people can safely share without judgment, and then understand that their story is their power.

This is something that you can use to help other people and also yourself. So I think seconding everything Deb said.

Amelia Bonow:

Thank you. That was an amazing list of resources, Deb. We'll definitely find whatever we can and put them in a follow-up. So I wanted to, I think we can wrap up pretty soon here, but I wanted to touch on ballot measures, which both of you mentioned, and it's definitely a big complex... I don't know if complex is the right word, but it's like there's a lot to say and we could spend a whole hour talking about ballot measures. But I guess for this context, I think that people should know that a lot of states put forth ballot measures that have some, compromise is not the right word, but that basically sell out young people, either in the form of parental notification, or I think that that's maybe the most common one off the top of my head, but probably parental consent as well.

And I just wanted to open up a space for both of you to talk about that. One of the reasons why conversations about ballot measures can be tricky, is that a lot of movement partners at the state level will support them with the rationale that if Idaho passes this, if a state has a total ban, and then they pass a ballot measure that has more abortion access than what's currently happening, that that is good even if it includes a viability limit and a parental consent thing. And I wanted to know if you could just talk a little bit about that and how... Just any thoughts you have to share, I guess.

Deborah Coffy:

I guess I can take a crack at it. So Florida, we had an amendment last year, which unfortunately failed, because we have a threshold that was passed the early 2000s that changed the majority vote from 50 to 60%. So we're one of the states that has that highest threshold to pass constitutional amendments. So we-

Amelia Bonow:

That was still very close, right?

Deborah Coffy:

It was very close. It was 57%, almost even 58%. So there were a lot of attacks from our Governor, because he used a lot of state dollars to really combat the amendment. And even a lot of attacks from anti-abortionists saying, "Oh, if Amendment 4 would've passed, anyone could

get an abortion. Abortions are just going to be for everybody. Judicial bypass won't be necessary." All these things that weren't true. And I think it really does show, and of course I'm not in law school and I'm not a legal expert of any means, that side will use anything to try to fail a ballot initiative or anything, even if it's not true. So I think really my question or my thing that I really want to propose is, I think legal experts and those who are in higher places within repro rights really should consider messaging that is important to note that youth also deserve abortion access.

That was a very tricky conversation, especially where we're in right now, and that could be a whole conversation. But if that side is going to already bring it up, and already weaponize it because they know how people feel about youth, we should be getting ahead of that, and we should be adopting language so that we're ahead of it, but also being inclusive that everyone has a right and has access to abortion.

Katie:

Yeah. And what I'll add on to that is, if you're not going to get ahead of that, because exactly to Deb's point, it has come up I think in almost all, if not all, constitutional amendment fights. And that's in states with forced parental involvement laws, they're always bringing it up no matter what. And so it's going to come up. So yeah, the best case is to get out in front of it, at the minimum, don't throw young people under the bus and say, "Well, actually it's not going to impact young people at all, or this isn't going to touch the parental involvement law." Because then when you go back later and if you're interested in trying to bring a state challenge or something like that, they're just going to say, "Hey, look, they were lying to you."

So at the minimum, don't set yourself up for hurting or harming young people. And I know that Advocates for Youth and If When How is part of my time at If When How, but I think it was right after Dobbs, did have a resource that had some messaging about how to navigate that type of stuff. So I need to send that to y'all to send out too, because it is something we've been looking at. And the recent parental rights, that is something that we're still definitely working at because it is something that resonates. But I think that public education piece is really important to understand what they're actually saying when they say parental rights. Because I think it's relying on this idea that parents should be involved in their child's life. And I don't think any of us agree that parents can play a really important role in guidance and all of that. And that's where it's hard to disagree with something like that, but that's not what they're talking about.

Amelia Bonow:

That's not not how it actually plays out.

Katie:

Right. It's not parental rights when the parent wants to support their young person.

Amelia Bonow:

Right, exactly. Exactly.

Katie:

It's not parental rights when they want the young person to have access to gender-affirming care, suddenly that goes away. It's parental rights for the things that they want, and that's what it is. And similarly with Deb in Missouri, we didn't really talk about young people for Amendment 3, and now the anti-abortion legislators have come back and we have to vote again in 2026, and that has a provision to ban gender-affirming care for young people under 18, which is already banned in state law. But that would put it into the Constitution, and put a parental consent requirement with the option of bypass, into the Constitution. And so again, they're really relying on that as this ballot candy to get people to vote for a ban that clearly Missourians don't want.

Amelia Bonow:

Yeah. Yeah. I think that it is really similar to the conversation about later abortion in that it's like, okay, currently there's a lot of cultural discomfort, or at least that's the perception from people who are putting together these political calculations. And it doesn't feel like there's been an investment in public education, and it's like we're going to have to just start being more comfortable talking about it if we're... Otherwise, it will just be a thing that antis can control the narrative. They're the only ones talking about it, and they can prey on that discomfort.

But I really believe that with both young people's abortion rights and later abortion, it's like people will get there. I fully believe that if we tell the truth about what this is, about what abortion bans actually look like in these situations, it's clearly not the humane outcome. It is clearly just forcing people into these terrible situations. And at the end of the day, it's like whether we're talking about somebody who needs a third tri abortion, or we're talking about a very young person who needs an abortion, it's like, well, do they control their body or does the state?

And I think that America has spoken over and over and been like, we don't want the government involved in these decisions. And so it's that full stop. And I think we have to stop selling people out. It's like this catch-22 where it's like, well, we're selling people out because we have to do this incremental thing in order to get the incremental progress. But it's like, well, when are we going to stop selling people out though? Because it's like not only that they sell people out, it's that you're not building the long game either.

Katie:

And they're building the long game.

Amelia Bonow:

And they are building the long game.

Katie:

This is the long game. They have used young people, people who are on low incomes to...

Amelia Bonow:

Yeah.

Katie:

That was an incremental strategy since Roe to chip, chip, chip away. And so until I think we realize how everyone has to be protected to ensure that everyone is protected.

Amelia Bonow:

And fully own it. Fully own it and stop being wishy-washy about it. I feel like every time we do one of these fucking ballot measures or whatever, it gives ground away.

Katie:

Yeah. Well, and it justifies restrictions. And when you can justify one restriction, it gets a little bit easier, and easier, and easier to justify the next one and the next one. Yeah.

Amelia Bonow:

Yeah. This has been an amazing session, and I'm so grateful to both of you for the work that you're doing, and the people you're supporting, and just showing up for young people in this way. And for teaching us about what this looks like on the ground, and what some of the issues are, and how to do better talking about it and get more comfortable. You definitely have mentioned a ton of resources that we will put in a follow-up email, but is there anything else that either of you wanted to say before we sign off? I wrote down this phrase, empowerment comes from within, that I think Deb said that I feel like is just my biggest takeaway. It's like that's it. It's not a thing like this other framing that we can help these people. It's like, no, that's not the way empowerment works. We got to trust people.

Deborah Coffy:

Yeah, I think that's a perfect segue, honestly, for sure. Just young people are worth it, is what I have to say. And please continue investing in young people in your communities, whether you're from a rural area or the city, or a low income area or middle-class area. It is just so important for youth to be involved. And I think a lot of people feel tired of the environment that we're in and sometimes can feel hopeless, but I'm hoping that people recognize from not only just elections like this past couple weeks ago, I know a lot of wins happened there, but through the everyday work that we do to really push access for folks.

So I just hope that people can know there's work being done and that you can plug in. And one more resource or recommendation I wanted to offer is this book that just came out called *Solidarity With Children*. It focuses a little bit about something called adult supremacy, and focuses on paternalism, and how a lot has been done underneath the name of parental rights to really just use children as a scapegoat to push certain agendas. I think I sent over that link so that can be dropped in the chat and also sent over email. But that can also be a very important read, it just came out. But just in case you want to learn more about the parental rights movement, and just about more of autonomy for young people and youth, that's another great way to learn about it as well.

Katie:

Yeah. And just support young people. If you don't work with young people, and you don't spend time with young people and listen to them, then it's very easy to get in your mind that they aren't capable, or they don't know or have all of those stigmatizing thoughts. But if you spend an afternoon talking with a young person who's advocating for themselves, advocating for their community, it is the best use of your time. And so many times I've been like, "Wow, they could take my job plus." The advocacy, all of it is so amazing and so inspiring. So I think it's personally fulfilling, but also just to invest that time and support in young people, because they're doing the damn thing, honestly, without the ability to vote. Without the ability and the ways that we have to show up, they're out there making so much change. And yeah, it's just something to invest in for sure.

Amelia Bonow:

Hell yes. Well, thank you both. You are brilliant and we appreciate you. And thank you everybody for coming to Abortion Academy. Take care of yourselves, and we'll see you next month. Thanks you guys. That was so awesome.

Katie:

Thank you. Thank you so much.

Amelia Bonow:

We appreciate you.

Deborah Coffy:

Thanks for having us, y'all.

Amelia Bonow:

Thank you. Bye.

Katie:

Bye.