

My name is Sarah Friesema and I am a member of the Board of Directors of the Lilith Fund for Reproductive Equity.

The Lilith Fund is an abortion fund operating throughout Central, South, West and Coastal Texas, from El Paso to Beaumont and from Waco to McAllen. Our organization provides small grants to low-income women who cannot afford the full cost of an abortion. Last year, we gave 1,214 such grants to women across the state.

Like many of you, we believe that abortion care is health care and that all people, regardless of economic status, deserve equal access to quality health care. We believe that the right to choose an abortion is meaningless without access to abortion services. Because no public funding exists for abortion care in the state of Texas, we raise money from private sources to assist low-income women.

The Lilith Fund works with women in a range of different situations. Some are young women with no children who say now is not the right time to begin a family. Others are mothers who can't afford another child – in fact, nearly three quarters of our clients already have at least one child. For some clients, a medical condition means that their pregnancy threatens their life or health, while others are heartbroken over deadly fetal anomalies. Still others have experienced intimate partner violence, sexual assault or reproductive coercion, leading them to want to terminate their pregnancy.

Whatever the story, obtaining an abortion despite financial barriers is a crucial moment of empowerment for those we work with. Once they obtain the abortion they need, our clients are able to focus their limited financial resources on children they already have and on other basic needs such as education, employment and economic stability.

Restrictive laws, abortion bans, and the defunding of Planned Parenthood and women's health programs – all of these hurt the women we work with. They prevent women from getting the health care they want and need and from moving forward in life. They prevent women from focusing on the families they already have by adding unjustifiable costs and stress to their lives. On the 40th anniversary of Roe v. Wade, we ask that the Commissioners Court stand in support of reproductive rights and support the resolution for comprehensive women's health services. On behalf of the Lilith Fund and those we serve, I thank you for your time, your compassion and your trust in our women and families.