



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Suquamish Tribal Council calls for protection of women's health care**

As citizens of the Suquamish Tribe, we know what it's like to have our basic human rights violated. Our children were taken away from their families, brought to boarding schools by misguided officials who believed that erasing our culture was the way to assimilate us into the society they were imposing on us. This was considered a progressive step compared to outright massacres of women, children, and elders.

Our bodies, too, were turned to the project of genocide as women were subjected to forced sterilization, often without their knowledge, as recently as the 1970s.

Given these experiences, it should come as no surprise that our Tribal Citizens reacted strongly to news of the overturn of abortion rights protections in *Roe v Wade*.

Our bodily integrity and our right to make decisions over whether or when we bear children are foundational to human dignity.

We are, in a word, sovereign. And our people have the right to determine if we carry a pregnancy to term.

Native women are more than twice as likely as white women to die from complications of pregnancy and childbirth – we will not allow our women to be denied access to the medical means to safely end a pregnancy.

Four out of five Native women report that they were victims of violence, and one in two were subjected to sexual violence. We find it unacceptable that the government could force our people to carry a pregnancy to term that resulted from sexual assault. Moreover, an unwanted pregnancy can make it more difficult for a woman to leave an abusive relationship and to care for her children when she is in precarious circumstances.

Even for women who are not in crisis, the decision to carry a pregnancy to term is a deeply personal one that will have ripple effects throughout her life, her family and community, and it is not for a group of people in black robes to make that decision for her.

Limits on federal funding for abortion have already created barriers for many women, especially those without financial resources.

With the Supreme Court's removal of Constitutional protections, this basic right is now even more precarious. And, for many of our relatives in states with severe abortion restrictions, the crisis is immediate.

This is not a state of affairs we can tolerate today, or for our young people in the future.

We call on elected officials and policy makers at all levels of government to take action to protect and preserve the reproductive rights of all people. And, as a sovereign people, we will be exploring ways to assure that our community members have access to the full range of reproductive health care services necessary to live dignified and healthy lives.

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