Minute on Reproductive Justice Revised March 10, 2024

Friends believe that God, or the Inner Light, dwells within each of us, and that by centering into stillness, we can individually and collectively listen to that inner voice and become clear about next steps to take. We support each person’s right to seek and follow this inner voice and hold such leadings with loving concern for the individual.

The decision to have, or not have, children is an intimate, personal one, to be held lovingly in the presence of the Inner light. Baltimore Yearly Meeting is neither for or against abortion, but supports each person’s right to choose, following the leadings of the Inner Light as they apply to their particular life situation.

Through our process of discernment, The Baltimore Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends opposes laws that restrict access to contraception and abortion. We support the right of all persons to make decisions involving their own reproductive health. The legacy of chattel slavery, in which women who were enslaved had no agency over their bodies, has in some ways persisted. Currently, many who have reproductive capacity still have little agency over their bodies due to cultural expectations, vulnerability in society, and in relationships, and laws that make access to reproductive healthcare difficult, and for some, impossible to obtain.

We recognize that decisions regarding reproductive healthcare are personal and may be difficult due to the person’s life circumstances. These include decisions to prevent pregnancy, to become pregnant, to abort a pregnancy, or carry a pregnancy to term. We oppose those who spread false medical information regarding abortion and contraception.

We believe in supporting those who make reproductive healthcare decisions that we might have made differently due to our own spiritual leadings, health and family circumstances. We respect those who hold religious views different from ours, and whose practice of religion differs from our own, as well as those who choose not to practice any religion. However, we oppose efforts to impose religious views on others.

We are aware that, in the United States, persons who are in the global majority are adversely affected more than others when laws are enacted that restrict access to contraception and abortion, and that they have higher rates of complications and death from pregnancy and delivery. Our Testimony of Equality, and our leading to become an antiracist body urges us to address and heal these inequities.

We seek and advocate for a just society that allows access to the full range of reproductive healthcare, and for a society in which children are protected from abuse and oppression, and have adequate food, housing, healthcare and education.

We believe that BYM Friends have discerned these beliefs through our process of seeking discernment in our Meetings for Worship with Attention to Business.