

President Trump nominated Neil Gorsuch last week, potentially tipping the court in favor of conservatism. At a Green Bay, Wis. town hall meeting Mar. 30, 2016, Trump also added to pro-choice advocates' fears, saying the government should somehow punish women who have abortions, but he later **walked back** on that comment. With Gorsuch's nomination and the resulting uncertainty of the court's ideological makeup, reproductive rights in Rhode Island are threatened, Ajello said.

If Roe v. Wade is overturned, some R.I. laws nullified by the Supreme Court decision could come back into play, Ajello said, including a law requires spousal notification prior to abortion.

"A woman has to inform her husband, and the doctor needs to have proof that the husband is aware that the abortion is to take place," Ajello said.

Laws like this aren't all that's restricting access to abortion. Because of poor access to abortion clinics and women's health resources, Rhode Island was awarded an F in reproductive freedom by NARAL Pro-Choice America — a national reproductive rights advocacy group.

Gopika **Krishna** '13 MD'17, a board member of Medical Students for Choice, said that students and community members should get involved in coalitions and organizations to protect reproductive rights — particularly for those most vulnerable in light of a possible overturn.

Under current Rhode Island constitutional law, the right to have an abortion would not be guaranteed in the event Roe v. Wade is overturned, **Krishna** said, adding that women would have to travel to states like New York or Vermont in order to have access to such procedures like abortion. Those with limited financial means and time would be the most at risk, she added.

"Our laws are ambiguous on the subject — we want to make sure that we're in a place where we don't have to be concerned that people will lose access to reproductive health care and abortion," said Craig O'Connor, R.I. Director of Public Policy and Government Relations with Planned Parenthood of Southern New England.

Though O'Connor does not anticipate an overturn of the Supreme Court ruling, he voiced his strong support of the Reproductive Health Act and continues to work with lawmakers like Ajello to protect reproductive rights.

"At this point, overturning Roe v. Wade is a distant possibility; it's not out of the realm of the unthinkable, but we want to make it clear a keep things the way they are currently under Roe v. Wade," O'Connor said.

O'Connor said he expects Ajello's bill to be introduced to the Senate in the coming days.

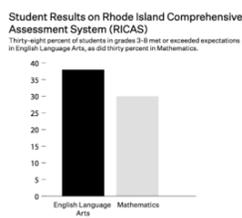
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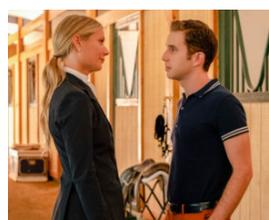
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