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### Statement of Gloria Allred

Today I am thrilled to announce and have here next to me, the person whom I have never previously met but wanted to be with me to celebrate my 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, and that person is 18-year-old Paxton Smith. Paxton recently received national television coverage because she was the valedictorian at her high school graduation in Texas and she surprised everyone there by tearing up the speech that school authorities thought that she would give and instead giving a passionate speech in support of the right to choose abortion and against Texas laws which were recently passed severely restricting a woman's right to choose legal abortion.

From afar, I admired Paxton's courage and commitment to the pro-choice movement. Paxton was and is a brilliant rebel with a cause.

At the time of her speech, I thought of contacting Paxton to indicate my support for her. I thought, however, that she was probably deluged with emails and tweets and that was not the time to reach out to her.

Fortuitously, however, I recently received an email from Sequoia Schmidt. Sequoia told me that she had asked Paxton if she would be interested in participating in a book with personal stories about the right to choose abortion. Sequoia asked me if I would be willing to do a chapter in the book. I agreed and also told Sequoia that I admired Paxton for her courage and would be thrilled if I could meet her and also have her come to Los Angeles to celebrate my birthday with her. Sequoia invited Paxton and Paxton immediately agreed.

I have been committed to supporting a woman's right to choose legal, safe, affordable, available abortion for decades. That is because I had an abortion that

was illegal prior to Roe v. Wade. It was not illegal for me to have it, but it was illegal for a doctor to provide it. For that reason, I had to find and hire a stranger who was not a licensed healthcare provider. I almost died from what he did to me. Hemorrhaging and with a 106-degree fever, I had to be taken to the hospital, and packed in ice. The nurse told me, "I hope this teaches you a lesson." Having become pregnant because of a rape, the lesson it taught me is that no woman should be forced to have a back-alley abortion and risk her life, as many women did prior to the 1973 U.S. Supreme Court decision of Roe v. Wade. I refuse to go back to those times when many women died or were permanently damaged because of the illegal abortions they had.

Today many politicians are waging a war against women and girls because they are supporting laws which severely restrict a woman's right to choose abortion. They are doing so for base political reasons and because they want to challenge Roe v. Wade and overturn it.

We need the support of everyone to fight back against their efforts because they are harming the most vulnerable among us, including poor women, young women, rural women and many women of color.

I am thrilled not only to have Paxton Smith by my side today, but in addition because we plan to work together in the future on this important pro-choice battle to preserve women's lives and their reproductive health. As an 80-year-old as of tomorrow, I know the importance of working with the 18-year-olds who are the next generation of women activists. Paxton is a leader and an inspiration.

Thank you very much, Paxton, for honoring me and I look forward to celebrating my birthday with you tomorrow.

Attorney Gloria Allred

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