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Dear Stages Friends,

When we first programmed *ROE* into our season, the world was in a different place. Women were in a different position. Today, as we gear up for the opening of this gripping historical drama by Lisa Loomer, we are compelled to speak directly to you, our audience, our friends, our reason for being.

When *ROE* was first written in 2015, Lisa was asked to write about a critical moment in American history for the American Revolutions project at Oregon Shakespeare Festival. Other works that came out of that program include Robert Schenkkan's *All the Way* and Lynn Nottage's *Sweat*. At first, Lisa was reluctant to take on a topic that has so divided our country and been so highly politicized. Then, that same motivation compelled her to take it on; she understood that by removing the politics and focusing on the women—on their humanity—she could reveal truth.

Lisa has updated the script each time major changes have happened around women's reproductive rights following the original production. The update Lisa wrote following the US Supreme Court *Dobbs* decision will have its first production right here at Stages, in Texas, where it all began with two women sitting across from each other in a diner. In reading the latest update, we were awash with feelings. Not only because of the script changes that reference *Dobbs*, but because the context in which the play is seen has forever changed following that Supreme Court decision. **This historical play is no longer historical.**

We both lead from a place of values. The five core values of Stages are what help us carve our way through questions great and small every day. We know that producing *ROE* will, like a grindstone on a blade, sharpen those values further.

Telling this story is an act of **courage**, especially for the nine women and three men who will perform it nightly. It will take **tenacity** for us to forge ahead in the face of inevitable criticism from those that believe this show has no place in Houston. We will celebrate and revel in the **generosity** of those who come forward to advocate for, promote, and financially support this production. *ROE* is, at its very core, about the most **intimate** decision a woman can make. We will create an environment where audiences can truly understand the people behind the rhetoric, Norma and Sarah, and how both women were complicated, full humans. There are no villains in this story, there are no "two sides"; there is a multitude of people, and all are **included**.

Since its inception, Stages has stood as a beacon within this community. As society has changed, what was once avant-garde is now routine. Stages must blaze onward because there are still those left to the margins. We continue to tell stories you can't see anywhere else in Houston because we simply must.

We desire everyone to feel safe to explore uncomfortable topics at Stages; for everyone to feel welcome and at home when you walk through our doors. To do that, we must work to eradicate oppression in every form. Just as Stages stands against racial injustice and prejudice against LGBTQIA+ people, we stand in solidarity with women and their right to bodily autonomy. We believe women. We trust women. And we reject the oppression that women now face without the protection of *Roe v. Wade*.

This play will ask you to explore the realities of decades of work through the eyes of two women. The creative team is made up entirely of women, each of whom brings her own lens. And the million-plus women that call Houston home each have a story as well. Let's honor them all.

In community,
Katie & Kenn

PEOPLE MAKE THEATER.