

## Open Letter to Arizona Lawmakers: Oppose SB 1164

*As of March 24th, 2022, nearly 160 health care professionals from across the state of Arizona signed the following open letter to state lawmakers opposing SB1164, legislation that would ban abortion care at 15 weeks. Signed by specialties and disciplines spanning the spectrum of clinical care, this letter sends a clear signal to lawmakers: the health care community is firmly opposed to this harmful legislation.*

Dear Members of the Arizona House of Representatives:

As Arizona health care professionals committed to ensuring our patients have access to the full range of comprehensive reproductive health care, we are in strong opposition to any legislation that interferes with evidence-based, patient-centered care. SB1164, which would arbitrarily ban abortion care at 15 weeks gestation, is an alarming attempt to improperly insert politics into the patient-clinician relationship, and the consequences for Arizonans would be dire. This legislation is bad medicine and bad policy, and we urge you to reject it for numerous reasons:

- A physician's expert judgment, medical ethics, and the health and well-being of patients form the basis of all medical decisions, and this should not be infringed upon. SB1164 violates medical ethics by forcing a physician to choose between offering safe, legal medical care that is within their best medical judgement or risk losing their license and facing criminal penalties.
- Being denied this care can have serious long-lasting consequences for a person's physical health, including leading to serious medical conditions during the end of pregnancy, and can inflict long-term harm on their emotional well-being and socioeconomic security. The social and economic repercussions of being denied a wanted abortion are also felt by the person's family— including their children.<sup>i</sup>
- Major medical organizations, including the American Medical Association, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Academy of Family Physicians have consistently opposed policies that defy current well-established medical practice and scientific facts—as SB1164 does. Organizations representing physicians, nurses, and other health care professionals are united against bans like the one included in this legislation as fundamentally at odds with the provision of safe and essential abortion care, with scientific evidence, and with medical ethics.<sup>ii iii</sup>
- The science is settled: abortion care is extremely safe. Studies have continually affirmed the safety record of abortion, and have concluded that, in fact, the greatest threat to the quality of abortion care in the United States are the litany of unnecessary and burdensome government regulations, including those like SB1164.<sup>iv</sup>
- This legislation would inflict particular harm on Arizonans already facing the most barriers to care, including low-income communities and those living in geographically isolated areas. Our patients here in Arizona would be forced to travel on average 282 miles farther to the nearest

clinic, significantly increasing both the cost and the risks associated with pregnancy, particularly for those patients with high-risk pregnancies.<sup>v</sup>

- Passing restrictive abortion laws like SB1164 could undermine our efforts to recruit and retain clinicians in Arizona. Currently practicing clinicians would also have little incentive to move to—or stay in—a state with mandates so fundamentally contrary to scientific and medical facts.
- Pregnancy can be a high-risk time in a person's life. Abortion may be medically necessary to preserve a patient's health, future fertility, or their life. Bans such as SB1164 would force clinicians into an unconscionable choice: deny patients needed care or break the law.<sup>vi</sup>
- Our state is already facing widening and unsustainable health care access divides. Arizonans need policymakers who will champion sound public health policies, rather than waste time and resources denying our communities access to essential reproductive health care.

As health care professionals, we see first-hand the harm arbitrary restrictions on abortion care cause patients. Whether patients are ready to build or create their family, already parenting, or have decided not to continue a pregnancy, all of them share something in common – they are making thoughtful, at times difficult, decisions about their health and well-being. Each of them must have access to high quality health care, including abortion care, without political interference, barriers, or delays.

We urge you to reject this legislation for the health and well-being of Arizona patients and the communities we care for.

CC:

Governor Doug Ducey

Sincerely,

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<sup>i</sup> The Harms of Denying a Woman a Wanted Abortion. Advancing New Standards in Reproductive Health. University of California at San Francisco. Available at [https://www.ansirh.org/sites/default/files/publications/files/the\\_harms\\_of\\_denying\\_a\\_woman\\_a\\_wanted\\_abortion\\_4-16-2020.pdf](https://www.ansirh.org/sites/default/files/publications/files/the_harms_of_denying_a_woman_a_wanted_abortion_4-16-2020.pdf).

<sup>ii</sup> American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists Committee Opinion 815, “Increasing Access to Abortion,” December 2020. available at <https://www.acog.org/clinical/clinical-guidance/committeeopinion/articles/2020/12/increasing-access-to-abortion>.

<sup>iii</sup> See ACOG Leads Groundbreaking Coalition in Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization (Sep 21, 2021) <https://www.acog.org/news/news-releases/2021/09/acog-leads-coalition-in-dobbs-v-jackson-womens-health-organization>

<sup>iv</sup> National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. The safety and quality of abortion care in the United States. Washington DC; National Academies Press; 2018. Available at <https://www.nap.edu/catalog/24950/thesafety-and-quality-of-abortion-care-in-the-united-states>.

<sup>v</sup> Guttmacher Institute, If Roe v. Wade Falls: Travel Distance for People Seeking Abortion, Oct. 2021, available at <https://states.guttmacher.org/#arizona>

<sup>vi</sup> Evaluating Priorities. Measuring Women’s and Children’s Health and Well-being Against Abortion Restrictions in the States. Center for Reproductive Rights and Ibis Reproductive Health 2017. Available at <https://www.reproductiverights.org/sites/default/files/documents/USPA-Ibis-Evaluating-Priorities-v2.pdf>.