

Open Letter to Florida Lawmakers: Oppose HB 5 and SB 146

As of February 27, 2022, more than 670 health care professionals from across the state of Florida have signed the following open letter to state lawmakers opposing H.B. 5/S.B. 146, 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.

Senator Wilton Simpson
Senate President
Florida Senate

Senator Lauren Book
Minority Leader
Florida Senate

Representative Chris Sprowls
Speaker
Florida House of Representatives

Representative Evan Jenne
Democratic Leader
Florida House of Representatives

Dear Senator Simpson, Senator Book, Speaker Sprowls, and Representative Jenne:

As Florida health care professionals committed to ensuring our patients have access to the full range of comprehensive reproductive health care, including abortion care, we write in strong opposition to any legislation that interferes with evidence-based, patient-centered care. H.B. 5/S.B. 146, which would arbitrarily ban abortion care at 15 weeks gestation, is one such alarming attempt to improperly insert politics into the patient-clinician relationship, and the consequences for our fellow Floridians would be dire. This legislation is bad medicine and bad policy, and we urge you to reject it for numerous reasons:

- Being denied abortion 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.ⁱ
- Major medical organizations, including the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists have consistently opposed policies that defy current well-established medical practice and scientific facts—as S.B. 146 and H.B. 5 do. 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.^{ii,iii}
- 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 S.B. 146 and H.B. 5.^{iv}

- This legislation would inflict particular harm on Floridians already facing the most barriers to care, including Black and Indigenous communities, other people of color, LGBTQ+ folks, and those living in geographically isolated areas. Our patients here in Florida would be forced to travel an average of 570 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.^v
- Passing restrictive abortion laws like S.B. 146 and H.B. 5 could undermine our efforts to recruit and retain clinicians in Florida. 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 S.B. 146 and H.B. 5 would force clinicians into an unconscionable choice: deny patients needed care or break the law.^{vi}
- Our state is already facing widening and unsustainable health care access divides. Floridians 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 our patients. Whether our 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.

You must act to put an end to this legislation. The health and well-being of Floridians and the communities we care for depend on you.

Sincerely,

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CC:

Members of the Florida House of Representatives
Members of the Florida Senate
Governor Ron DeSantis

ⁱThe 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.

ⁱⁱ 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>.

ⁱⁱⁱ 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>.

^{iv} 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>.

^v See “Proposed Legislation on Women’s Health Care Threatens Delivery of Compassionate, Evidence-Based Care,” (Jan 19, 2022), <https://www.acog.org/news/news-articles/2022/01/proposed-womens-health-care-legislation-threatens-compassionate-evidence-based-care>.

^{vi} 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>.