

Protect Reproductive Health Care in South Carolina

— Stop Abortion Restrictions like SB 1 —

The South Carolina Section of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) is the state's leading group of physicians dedicated to the health care of women. Our members dedicate their careers and lives to providing evidence-based care, delivered with quality, safety, integrity, and compassion. As such, ACOG South Carolina Section strongly opposes medically unjustified regulations of health care, including restrictions on abortion care like SB 1. These policies are harmful to women's health, and their futures. Women cannot achieve their full potential without having complete bodily autonomy.

What is at stake

Restrictions on reproductive health care replace medical facts with political rhetoric and personal ideology. They tie the hands of health-care providers from being able to provide the standard of care, and providing evidence-based health care to their patients. Such restrictive proposals before the SC legislature include:

- Dictating the information and care health care practitioners provide to their patients, inappropriately inserting politicians into the patient-clinician relationship.
- Denying bodily autonomy and the capacity to make personal healthcare decisions regarding pregnancy to women and girls of our state
- Effectively banning abortion by criminalizing abortion early in pregnancy—before many women even know they are pregnant, whether the fetus has a lethal anomaly, or what pregnancy complications may befall them.
- Criminalizing health-care providers for caring for their patients according to their medical training and professional judgement.
- Creating the possibility of a private right of action against physicians when they care for their patients within their scope of practice, a dangerous precedent for the regulation of medical practice more broadly.

Legislators must address the real challenges facing South Carolina women and families

COVID-19 continues to test the strength of our health care system, our economy, and our social safety net, and has only exacerbated and underscored already unsustainable health care disparities. Instead of focusing on divisive, unjustified restrictions that jeopardize health care access and outcomes, we urge lawmakers to turn their attention to the urgent health care needs of our state's women and families. For example:

- South Carolina ranks 42nd in maternal mortality for the United States, with a ratio of 24 deaths/100,000

live births. These bills do nothing to improve maternal health outcomes, nor will they reduce the need and desire for women to seek abortion care, but they will limit the availability of safe abortion care and threaten to exacerbate our state's maternal mortality crisis.

- Our state is also facing a dire shortage in our women's health provider workforce, particularly in rural South Carolina, which has at least 10 counties that have no obstetrician-gynecologists. We are deeply concerned that passing restrictive abortion laws would jeopardize our residency programs' accreditation, would undermine our efforts to recruit and retain clinicians in South Carolina, and would give currently practicing clinicians little incentive to move to—or stay in—a state with mandates running so fundamentally contrary to scientific and medical facts.

The bottom line

Shared decision making between patients and their health care providers must continue to rely on science, best practices, and individual needs. ACOG South Carolina will continue to oppose legislation that restricts access to reproductive health care and seeks to punish clinicians providing compassionate, evidence-based care.

For more information, or to get involved, visit acog.org/StopSCbans or contact us at stateleg@acog.org

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. *Increasing Access to Abortion*. Committee Opinion; 2020. Available at: <https://www.acog.org/clinical/clinical-guidance/committee-opinion/articles/2020/12/increasing-access-to-abortion>

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. *Legislative interference with patient care, medical decisions, and the patient-physician relationship*. Statement of Policy; 2019. Available at: <https://www.acog.org/clinical-information/policy-and-position-statements/statements-of-policy/2019/legislative-interference-with-patient-care-medical-decisions-and-the-patient-physician-relationship>