

April 14, 2023

DELIVERED VIA EMAIL

Governor Ron DeSantis
400 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Dear Governor DeSantis:

As organizations representing health care professionals in Florida and from across the country, we write in strong opposition to H.B. 7/S.B. 300. These bills attempt to arbitrarily ban abortion care at 6-weeks gestation, require proof of abuse for survivors of rape and incest, and allocate \$25 million in recurring funds to anti-abortion centers. These bills interfere with health care professionals' ability to provide evidence-based, patient-centered care and attempt to insert politics into the patient-provider relationship. We need policymakers to ensure timely access to the full range of reproductive health care rather than waste time and resources limiting access to the essential care Floridians need.

Abortion is normal, safe, essential health care. All abortion bans and restrictions on abortion care are unreasonable, medically unjustifiable, and simply put – dangerous. In fact, in 2018, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (NASSEM) published a comprehensive study affirming the safety of abortion and pointed out that the biggest threat to patient safety is the litany of medically unnecessary regulations that raise costs and delay procedures, ultimately putting patients' health at risk.¹

Politics has no place in the exam room. These are private decisions that should be kept firmly between a patient and their trusted health care provider. Each patient is different, and every pregnancy is unique, which is why patients should be able to access the full spectrum of individualized care responsive to their needs. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), along with other medical societies, identifies abortion as an essential health care service that requires timely access to care.² Critical health care like abortion should never be singled out or banned at an arbitrary point in pregnancy, and reproductive health care should never be used as a political bargaining chip.

The exceptions proposed in these bills are impractical and futile. Exceptions to abortion bans do not work. They force providers to waste precious time consulting with lawyers and grappling with the question "how sick is sick enough?" instead of caring for the patient before them. For survivors of rape and incest, the forced disclosure and required documentation creates yet another barrier to care and forces health care providers to bring law enforcement into patient care when it may not be wanted, exposing patients to further harm and risk of criminalization.

The proposal to allocate \$25 million annually to anti-abortion centers is a direct attack on pregnant people and sends a clear message that Florida does not support science and medicine. These centers are

¹ 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>.

² 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>.

often religiously affiliated with ties to national anti-abortion organizations. They are not health clinics; their staff generally have no medical training, they share false and misleading information about pregnancy, contraception, and abortion care, and they often refuse to make referrals to real health centers. Anti-abortion centers intentionally target low-income people, and Black, Indigenous and people of color with targeted advertising. Their insidious behavior is especially threatening in this post-Roe crisis. Patients deserve access to truthful information from real medical providers so that they can make informed decisions about their health care and life.

Should H.B. 7/S.B. 300 go into effect it would harm all Floridians, but particularly those already facing the most barriers to care, including Black, Indigenous, people of color, LGBTQ+ folks, and those living in rural areas. Denial of abortion care can have serious long-lasting consequences on a person's health and well-being. Studies show women who have been denied a wanted abortion are more likely to experience high blood pressure and other serious medical conditions during the end of pregnancy, more likely to remain in relationships where interpersonal violence is present, and more likely to experience poverty.³

We strongly urge you to veto this legislation. Politicians have no place in the exam room and medically unnecessary regulations on abortion care are harmful to patients and communities. The health and well-being of Floridians depends on you.

Respectfully,

Physicians for Reproductive Health
Planned Parenthood of South, East and North Florida
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³ 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.

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