

# KENTUCKY DOCTORS, HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS, & MEDICAL STUDENTS CALL FOR THE REPEAL OF ALL ABORTION BANS

As health care providers in Kentucky, we are gravely concerned for the well-being of our citizens, particularly women. We raise our collective professional voices and call on Kentucky legislators to protect the freedom of women in our state. We also call for repeal of the total ban on abortions.

Restrictive health care laws affect all Kentuckians, not just women seeking abortion. More than half of Kentucky's 120 counties had no dedicated OB-GYN physician in 2021 and the primary care shortfall is affecting 94% of Kentucky counties. Kentucky is ranked 36 out of 50 for infant mortality and has the 6th highest rate of maternal mortality in the nation. In a national survey of nearly 500 third- and fourth-year medical students with interests across specialties, NEARLY 60% reported that they were unlikely to apply for residency training in a state with abortion restrictions. Even if residents come to the state to train, they will receive inadequate instruction in important life-saving techniques, which will further harm women in the state. The abortion bans make it more difficult to retain and recruit physicians in Kentucky and continue the downward spiral of inadequate or unavailable healthcare. Physicians are unwilling to live and work in a state that puts them and their patients at risk.

Complex and personal healthcare decisions should be made between a health care professional and the patient without the interference of legislators whose decisions are not based on science, best medical practices, or the individual patient's best interest. Kentucky's total ban on abortion puts patient's lives at risk. Women with pregnancy complications, lethal fetal anomalies, tubal pregnancies, and those women who face the diagnosis of cancer during pregnancy are all required to risk their lives or leave the state for health care. Kentucky's harsh policies display little regard for those who must endure them.

What defines and necessitates abortion is nuanced. Women may require abortion to undergo life-preserving treatments such as chemotherapy. Women may choose to have an abortion to terminate an unviable pregnancy, and to be spared the emotional anguish and physical threat of carrying a fetus that cannot survive outside the womb. A woman (including a child or an adolescent minor) may choose to have an abortion after incest or being raped and impregnated. A woman may choose to have an abortion simply to protect her future. No explanation should be required for a choice that guarantees a woman equal status in society as a man: freedom to control and preserve her individual health and wellbeing.

Some of us are currently caring for patients seeking abortions or experiencing medical emergencies that threaten their health; we understand the complexities of this decision. Many of us have been forced to put our patient's care at risk because of restrictive state laws that limit access to reproductive health care and criminalize evidence-based standards of medical care.

**Doctors are guided by evidence-based medicine and are bound by our commitment to:  
DO NO HARM**

We stand steadfast in our support for the sanctity and privacy of the patient-physician relationship. Withholding treatment until a preventable medical emergency occurs is antithetical to our roles as healthcare workers. We wholeheartedly believe that a woman's mental health is essential in the discussions regarding medical necessity and emergency; suicide is a leading cause of death amongst women of child-bearing age. A government that takes away the freedom of women and pregnant persons to access critical medical care and threatens physicians with criminal penalties for upholding their oath is un-American.

***As physicians of many specialties and allied health professionals, we call for the Kentucky State Legislature, as well as all elected and government officials in the state of Kentucky, to repeal all abortion bans.***

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