

Dear Senators Huffman and Wilson,

As the President of the Columbus Medical Association and a practicing Obstetrician/Gynecologist, I see the real impact of political decisions on patients' health every day. Never has the impact been clearer than with the decision of the legislature to try to pass SB145 which would make a perfectly safe surgical procedure illegal.

Regardless of one's personal faith orientation, it is completely untenable for the State of Ohio to criminalize physician behavior and deny a medical procedure to patients that is both Constitutional and consistent with a physician's professional medical standards of care.

I do not perform abortions but I am often called to counsel my patients about all their options, including abortion, when their baby has a lethal anomaly or when pregnancy would threaten their own life. These laws would make what Ob/Gyns do every day a felony under the law. How are my physician colleagues supposed to counsel and care for their patients when we face double jeopardy in the sense that we may do something against the law by providing reasonable medical care but if we follow the law we may end up being charged with medical malpractice.

Statistically, there is proof that women will continue to have abortions regardless of whether they are legal or not, so politicians should ensure that they can be done safely and legally and physicians should not have to fear prosecution for doing their ethical duty. By making abortion illegal in Ohio you will NOT prevent abortions BUT you will see an increase in septic abortions and maternal death. If you are truly interested in reducing abortion rates you would provide contraception for free like Colorado and Hawaii do.

Ohio has a terrible track record when it comes to infant mortality and there are task forces which are working to reduce infant mortality. Unfortunately, when you force women to carry a pregnancy conceived by rape or incest you also see a woman who will not seek prenatal care and this will worsen the outcomes related to infant mortality. There is already data that supports this.

Each bill may not seem like a big deal, but it has added up to the point where it is becoming virtually impossible for a woman to obtain an abortion in Ohio, particularly a woman in poverty or from a rural underserved area, who is unable to take off time to travel to the clinic multiple times or find transportation to one of the few clinics left in Ohio. If you and other politicians truly care about women and life, you should support women through these difficult situations and fund organizations such as Planned Parenthood, provide free contraception, work on stopping the cycle of poverty and teenage pregnancy, and keep abortion safe and legal.

Criminalizing physician's actions that are consistent with their professional standards of care is simply unacceptable.

If laws like this are allowed in Ohio, it will not be long before there will be a shortage of obstetricians in our state, as young professionals will not choose Ohio to locate their practice. I would be happy to discuss this with you or any other Senator that would like more details. I can be reached by email at anitapsomani@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

Anita Somani M.D.
President, Columbus Medical Association
ACOG Fellow