

**Examining the Harm to Patients from Abortion Restrictions and  
the Threat of a National Abortion Ban  
House Committee on Oversight and Reform  
10:00 AM, Thursday, September 29, 2022  
Statement for the Record  
Rep. Gerald E. Connolly (D-VA)**

Thank you, Chairwoman Maloney, for holding this important hearing to examine the painful consequences families across the nation continue to suffer in the wake of the Supreme Court's cruel *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* decision. Unequivocally, abortion care is healthcare. Over 50 percent of abortions in the United States occur via medication, a safe method that has been available for 20 years. Instead of improving access to healthcare, Republicans rabidly pursue draconian policies that limit abortion access and endanger lives. I want to highlight the following heartbreaking stories from women whose lives have been irrevocably altered by six unelected individuals:

- In South Carolina, a 19-year-old woman's water broke 15 weeks into her pregnancy. State law prohibited doctors from extracting the fetus and forced her to risk the 50 percent chance she would lose her uterus and 10 percent chance she would develop sepsis and die.
- In Louisiana, an expecting woman discovered her fetus was missing the top of its skull, resulting in a rare but devastating condition known as acrania. She was nevertheless mandated to carry her fetus to term despite its unviability.
- In Arizona, after 21 weeks of pregnancy, a devastated mother was denied the choice to undergo a premature induction of her nonviable pregnancy, despite the certainty it would not survive.
- In Florida, a parentless 16-year-old girl, was forced to give birth after courts deemed, she was not "sufficiently mature to decide whether to terminate her pregnancy."
- In Nebraska, a 34-year-old woman's water broke too early, was denied access to an abortion and forced to watch her child gasp for breath and die.
- In Ohio, two pregnant women diagnosed with cancer, were denied access to chemotherapy and forced to leave the state for lifesaving medical care.
- Another patient, a ten-year-old-girl, was forced to travel out-of-state to receive an abortion.
- In Texas, a woman who had a miscarriage was denied an abortion even after developing a potentially life-threatening womb infection. She eventually suffered complications resulting in severe blood loss, surgery, and incubation.
- Another patient who learned that she had miscarried, was forced to carry her dead fetus for two weeks, resulting in unnecessary emotional trauma.
- Another woman suffered from a premature membrane rupture and was denied an abortion until her condition became life-threatening.

Pregnant people encounter countless life-threatening situations—such as placenta accrete or ectopic pregnancies—that demand access to abortion care. Republicans, however, fail to face this reality. There is no “good” abortion or “bad abortion.” There is only abortion health care—and access to it must be protected.

Just three months after the repeal of *Roe v. Wade*, 15 states have banned abortion entirely and an additional 11 states have severely limited or threatened abortion access. I dissent from this undemocratic and erroneous decision. Polling indicates that 60 percent to 80 percent of people in the United States support abortion care access in all or most cases. Just last month, when put directly to the people, voters in Kansas overwhelmingly voted to protect abortion access. In Virginia, 80 percent of people live in counties that lack clinics that provide abortion care. Virginia’s Governor Glenn Youngkin announced his intention to make matters worse by banning abortion after 15 weeks across the state. One Virginia state senator announced a plan to introduce a “life at conception” bill. This legislation, which is supported by Governor Youngkin and Republican state legislators, is an attack on women’s rights and science-based reproductive health care. Allow me to be very clear: In Virginia, it is still your right to access abortion care. Virginia Democrats made sure of that. We will fight to guarantee it stays that way.

On September 13, 2022, Senator Lindsey Graham introduced legislation that would establish a nationwide 15-week ban on abortion with penalties that would imprison doctors who perform abortions for up to five years. A companion bill in the House already has 94 Republican cosponsors. Nationwide, Republican politicians have led efforts and successfully enacted a sleuth of bills containing more than 1,336 abortion restrictions. Roughly 44% of those laws have passed in the last decade alone. In their rush to villainize, criminalize, and dehumanize those in need of health care, Republicans flagrantly disregard one in four women who will have an abortion by the age of 45 in the United States. If Republicans really cared about preserving life and equitable healthcare, they would not relentlessly attack the Affordable Care Act and oppose Medicaid expansion. They would support our efforts to extend paid family leave and stop sitting idly by as about 700 expectant mothers, including a disproportionate number of black expectant mothers, die from pregnancy-related causes each year.

Banning abortion does not stop abortion – it only endangers pregnant people, and limits health care access for all women – particularly people of color, those in rural communities, and people with low incomes. A study from Duke found that banning abortion in the United States would lead to a 21 percent increase in the number of pregnancy-related deaths overall and a 33 percent increase among Black women. Further, about 75 percent of abortion patients are poor or low-income, and research shows that individuals who are stripped of their right to choose experience an increase in household poverty. Abortion bans are a direct assault on low-income communities and communities of color.

I will never stop fighting to protect fundamental rights. That is why I held a Women’s Health Roundtable earlier this year to focus on addressing the challenges and disparities that women face when it comes to health care. I am also a proud recipient of Planned Parenthood’s highest possible score on its Congressional Scorecard and am committed to codifying abortion

rights and leveraging the federal government's power to protect bodily autonomy and reproductive freedom for individuals.

I am a staunch supporter of the Women's Health Protection Act (H.R. 3755 and H.R. 8296), which already passed the House. I am also a cosponsor of the Equal Access to Abortion Coverage in Health Insurance (EACH) Act and implore my colleagues to pass this bill to repeal the Hyde Amendment - a dangerous and outdated prohibition on the federal government covering abortion services for enrollees in federal insurance programs, such as Medicaid, TRICARE, or the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program. Finally, I support President Biden's executive order which protects patient privacy and preserves access to reproductive health services such as a medication abortion and emergency contraception

We must establish a statutory right to receive and provide abortion care services in the United States to prevent pushing millions of pregnancies into the shadows. If we must eliminate the filibuster to get it done, so be it.