



**Testimony of Jodi Magee
President and CEO, Physicians for Reproductive Health
Senate Judiciary Committee
March 15, 2016**

Introduction

Good morning and thank you, Mr. Chairman, for this opportunity to testify.

My name is Jodi Magee and I am the President and CEO of Physicians for Reproductive Health. Physicians for Reproductive Health is a doctor-led national not-for-profit organization that uses evidence-based medicine to promote sound reproductive health policies. We were founded in 1992 by a small committee of concerned physicians who believed that doctors have a public health responsibility to speak out in support of reproductive health care, including access to abortion and contraception.

In recent years, those who would limit the rights of women to safely access a legal medical procedure have successfully passed hundreds of restrictions on abortion; some under the guise of protecting women, but all designed in reality to limit women's access to safe and legal services. These laws try to shame, pressure, and punish a woman who has decided to have an abortion. The doctors in our organization believe that women deserve better.

All patients deserve dignified, compassionate, and appropriate medical care. Every woman faces her own unique circumstances, challenges, and potential complications. She must be able to make medical decisions based on her doctor's advice and what is right for herself and her family – without interference from politicians.

Physicians for Reproductive Health welcomes the opportunity to submit testimony on proposed legislation related to this hearing. Make no mistake; the legislation we are discussing represents another attempt to make it impossible for women to access abortion. Because politicians know that the public and major medical groups do not support this position, they are disingenuously presenting these restrictions as only applying to very limited situations. But let us be clear: this is part and parcel of a concerted effort to intrude on the personal health care decisions that belong to a woman and her physician.

Troubling national trends

Our physicians are profoundly committed to women's health and well-being and have a long track record of delivering safe, legal care. That is why we are extremely concerned about the



**Testimony of Jodi Magee
President and CEO, Physicians for Reproductive Health
Senate Judiciary Committee
March 15, 2016**

continuing legislative attacks on reproductive health services. Increasing limits on access to abortion care and harmful rhetoric have resulted in unnecessary, undue burdens for women and doctors.

In the past four years alone, state legislatures across the country have passed more than 230 bills to limit access to reproductive health care, resulting in the Supreme Court's decision to take up the issue of abortion access this year. From mandatory waiting periods that place needless financial and emotional burdens on women, to requirements for doctors and clinics to conform to standards that are not related to improving patient outcomes, abortion has quickly become out of reach for countless women.

The recent assaults on abortion care are reminiscent of the time before *Roe v. Wade*, when abortion access depended on a woman's socioeconomic status, where she lived, or her ability to travel elsewhere to get the care she needed. Existing restrictions on abortion care disproportionately impact the most vulnerable women. A woman's right to a safe and legal abortion should not depend on her zip code. We are already seeing women taking matters into their own hands.

Increased violence against physicians

Despite a lack of evidence of any wrongdoing by abortion providers, misleading, heavily-edited, and discredited videos claiming to "uncover" illegal activity at Planned Parenthood clinics have been used by lawmakers as a reason to increase restrictions on women's access to abortion. A result of these kinds of false claims and increasingly toxic rhetoric has been an unprecedented increase in threats and violence directed at abortion providers and health clinics.

Last fall, a police officer and two others were killed when a gunman entered a Planned Parenthood clinic in Colorado Springs, Colorado. This was the most recent attack in a long line of murders, arsons and other incidents of violence directed at those who provide abortions – and the women who seek them.

Physicians for Reproductive Health deplores the incendiary rhetoric that dehumanizes the courageous doctors who are literally putting their lives on the line to provide safe and legal abortion care.



**Testimony of Jodi Magee
President and CEO, Physicians for Reproductive Health
Senate Judiciary Committee
March 15, 2016**

Legacy of safe abortion care

The legislation under discussion today is nothing more than the latest effort to completely ban all abortions. While the vast majority of abortions happen well before 20 weeks, doctors and their patients may determine that abortion care after 20 weeks is necessary for a variety of reasons. These bills deny women that option, even in very complicated health circumstances.

The legislation also threatens physicians with criminal penalties for providing professional and compassionate care in an attempt to deter doctors from providing abortions. But this has dire consequences for women. When doctors are facing complex, urgent medical situations, they need to be able to focus on providing the best treatment for their patients, and not delay as they consider whether their professional judgment will land them in prison. In no other area of medicine is this kind of political intrusion into medical care tolerated.

Contrary to what these bills imply, the United States has a long history of safe abortion care. Today, abortion has an enviable record in medicine, with a 99% safety rate and a less than 1% complication rate. About one in three women will have an abortion in her lifetime. We should not be singling out such essential health care for medically unjustified regulations. That is why organizations like the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists have opposed these deceptive bills.

Conclusion

Physicians that provide abortion place the highest priority on their patients' safety and well-being. For more than 40 years they have been providing high quality abortion care. I ask that this committee trust women, trust their doctors, and work to protect access to safe, legal abortion. A patient's unique circumstances and her physician's medical advice, not a politician's opinion, should determine the care she receives.

Thank you.