

THE NETWORK NEWSLETTER

A Health Policy and Advocacy Update - *March, 2023*

Thank you for your participation in the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine's **State Liaison Network** (SLN). Our quarterly newsletter brings you the latest advocacy, policy, and public health updates, happenings, and actions from the Society.

In this issue, you'll find:

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CHECK OUT OUR NEW ADVOCACY HUB



Just last month, SMFM officially launched our new [Advocacy Hub](#)! This is your one-stop shop for all things advocacy, providing all the information you need about SMFM's advocacy priorities, activities and updates, and more. The Hub includes a state bill tracker that can help you monitor what is being proposed in your state, as well as an easy-to-use portal for you to request SMFM engagement and support for your advocacy efforts. You can also send your fellow SMFM members here to sign up for the State Liaison Network.

SLN EVENTS

[Quarterly SLN Webinar](#)



You can watch recordings of past webinars [here](#).

Don't forget to register for our next SLN webinar, [Clinicians as Advocates: MMRCs and Evidence-Informed Policies](#), happening **tomorrow** at **noon ET!**

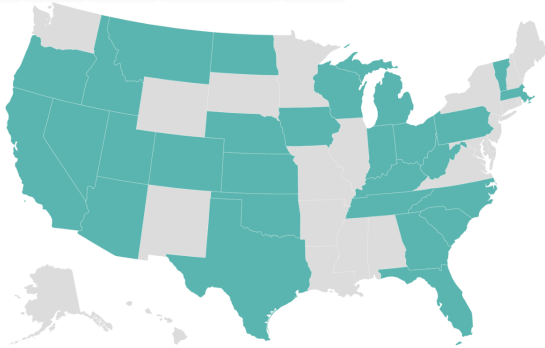
This webinar will highlight the importance of data in developing and advocating for evidence-informed policies, focusing on maternal mortality review committees (MMRCs) as an example. Joined by Dr. Lisa Hollier and Julie Zaharatos from the CDC Maternal Mortality Prevention Team, we will discuss the nation-wide maternal health crisis, the important role MMRCs play, and how to use MMRC findings and recommendations to advocate for equitable change.

STATE LIAISONS IN ACTION

All Advocacy Activities

Select a state to see how our members and staff have taken action in the last 12 months to advance perinatal and reproductive health.

[All Advocacy](#) [Ballot Initiatives](#) [Judicial Advocacy](#) [Legislative & Regulatory Advocacy](#) [Media Advocacy](#)



Idaho – Dr. Stacy Seyb lobbied Idaho legislators to remove the sunset clause for Idaho's Maternal Mortality Review Committee.

Montana – Dr. Timothy Mitchell has been active at the state capitol, providing testimony for multiple bills impacting perinatal and reproductive health care.

North Carolina – A group of clinician advocates, including SLN members **Drs. Alison Stuebe** and **Nicole Teal**, have been working with state-based advocacy organizations to stop state legislators from further restricting access to abortion. Their advocacy includes [speaking at a news conference outside of the state Capitol](#) and [walking the halls of the General Assembly](#). Additionally, **Dr. Stuebe** [penned an opinion editorial](#) highlighting how North Carolina's abortion laws force her to provide dangerous care.

Ohio – Multiple SLN members, including **Drs. David Hackney** and **Justin Lappen**, are involved in efforts to pass a [ballot measure](#) in Ohio that would ensure access to reproductive health care, including abortion. The campaign is currently collecting signatures to get the measure on the ballot this November.

Pennsylvania – Dr. **Sindhu Srivinas** and her colleagues have been regularly meeting with state legislators to discuss policies to advance perinatal health.

Texas – SLN members in Texas have been working with the Texas EMS Trauma & Acute Care Foundation (TETAF) and other stakeholders to establish a centralized perinatal data system.

SMFM has also been responding to member requests to endorse or oppose legislation in multiple states. This year, we've sent letters to state House and Senate leadership in [Kansas](#), [Kentucky](#), and [Nebraska](#) opposing legislation that would hinder access to perinatal and reproductive health care; and sent letters of support to [Oregon](#) and [Nevada](#) state House leadership on bills related to perinatal quality collaboratives. Additionally, we've sent a letter to [Tennessee](#) state Senate and House leadership expressing our support of access to the full range of perinatal and reproductive health care, urging them to ensure medical decisions are left between patients and their providers.

You can check out all of our member-driven state advocacy on the [interactive map on our advocacy hub](#).

Have you been advocating for reproductive and perinatal health in your state? Share your work with SMFM by emailing Samantha Berg at sberg@smfm.org.

SMFM ACTIONS AND UPDATES

Amicus Briefs

SMFM continues to submit friend of the court briefs to protect access to health care services critical to our mission. We have joined partnering organizations to file briefs supporting access to abortion in [Florida](#), [Iowa](#), and [Wisconsin](#). Additionally, we joined our partners in briefs in federal cases to protect and expand access to [mifepristone](#).

Ballot Measures

Last month, SMFM announced our endorsement of the Ohio ballot measure. Read our [press release](#) to learn more.

Legislative Advocacy

With most state legislative sessions in full swing, SMFM has been working with partners to advance legislation that would protect or expand access to both reproductive and perinatal health care. Last week, we joined our national partners in signing onto a letter urging Governor Polis of Colorado to support their 3-bill [Safe Access to Protected Health Care Package](#). Additionally, we signed onto a [letter in Wisconsin](#) in February urging state legislators to extend postpartum Medicaid to 12 months. Finally, SMFM joined multiple state-based organizations in supporting the [Texas Perinatal Data System Funding rider](#), which has been presented to state legislators for consideration in future budgets.

On the federal level, SMFM has led efforts to introduce bipartisan legislation in the US House of Representatives to promote the inclusion of pregnant and lactating people in clinical trials. Led by Representatives Kathy Castor (FL-14), Brian Fitzpatrick (PA-01), and Lauren Underwood (IL-14), the Advancing Safe Medications for Moms and Babies Act (H.R. 1117) would implement foundational steps to ensure that pregnant and lactating people are included in research to better determine the safety and efficacy of therapeutics, medical devices, and vaccines. The bill provisions are all recommendations of the Taskforce for Research Specific to Pregnant Women and Lactating Women (PRGLAC). Created by the 21st Century Cures Act (P.L. 114-255), PRGLAC was charged with making recommendations to the Secretary of Health and Human Services and Congress on opportunities to advance clinical research in these populations. [You can read more about the bill here](#).

STATE HAPPENINGS

NEW: State Policy Conversation

SMFM's Manager of State Advocacy, Samantha Berg, sat down with our Policy Research Consultant, Maddy Webb, to discuss trends in state abortion legislation this session. [Tune in to hear about abortion pill reversal, born-alive bills, and more](#).

Policy Conversation with SMFM's State Advocacy Team

Recorded on Tuesday, March 21, 2023



Celebrating abortion access wins

States have been working hard to protect and expand access to abortion care. Just last week, Governor Healey of [Massachusetts](#) issued a statement that all pharmacies in the Commonwealth are required to keep abortion medications stocked, including mifepristone.

Following their successful 2022 ballot measure that affirmed constitutional protections for abortion, [Michigan](#) enacted legislation to remove abortion from the criminal code.

[Minnesota](#) has introduced a number of pro-active bills this session, including legislation establishing a fundamental right to reproductive health. The companion bills SF 1 and HF 1 passed in late January and went into effect on February 1, one day after the Governor's approval.

Two weeks ago, Governor Grisham of [New Mexico](#) enacted the Reproductive and Gender-Affirming Health Care Freedom Act, which prohibits public bodies from denying, restricting, or discriminating against a person's right to use or refuse reproductive health care or gender-affirming health care.

Both [New York](#) and [Washington, DC](#) enacted shield laws, which would protect against the arrest and prosecution of providers who perform abortions within their borders. Though we have yet to see a shield law put into action, we are excited that states are taking proactive steps to protect abortion providers.

Monitoring abortion bans and restrictions

Anti-abortion state legislators continue to introduce harmful bills. [Utah](#) enacted legislation prohibiting state licensure of abortion clinics. Considering that a majority of procedural abortion care is provided at stand-alone clinics, this will have a significant impact on access to abortion services in the state.

Wyoming passed two anti-abortion laws – the first, a [total abortion ban](#) that went into immediate effect; and the second, a [ban on medication abortion](#) to go into effect this summer. Fortunately, on March 22, a Wyoming judge issued a temporary restraining order against the total ban, allowing abortion care to resume.

As of March 22, 2023, 18 states have abortion bans up to 20 weeks gestation currently or soon to be in effect: **Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, West Virginia, and Wisconsin.**

13 of these states (**Alabama, Arkansas, Idaho, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, West Virginia, and Wisconsin**) have total bans.

In 8 states, courts are determining if existing or new bans can take effect: **Arizona, Indiana, Iowa, Montana, North Dakota, Ohio, Utah, and Wyoming.**

For up to date information on state abortion policies, see resources from [Abortion Finder](#), [Guttmacher Institute](#) and the [New York Times](#). You can also track pending state legislation alongside SMFM staff on our [Advocacy Hub](#).

Perinatal health advancements

Several states have been working to expand coverage for postpartum Medicaid. [Mississippi, Oklahoma, Utah, and Wyoming](#) all expanded coverage to 12 months postpartum. Utah's bill specified that the extension is for people whose pregnancies end in birth, miscarriage, still birth, or an abortion permitted under existing statute. Additionally, Wyoming's bill only extends coverage until March 31, 2027. You can learn more about what states have and have not extended postpartum Medicaid using KFF's [Medicaid Postpartum Coverage Extension Tracker](#).

[Virginia](#) passed a law to update the reporting requirements from triennial to annual for the Maternal Mortality Review Team. In addition to being made available to the Governor and General Assembly, all reports will also be available to the public.

TAKE ACTION

[Share Anonymous Stories of Clinical Care](#)

SMFM is regularly approached by policymakers and reporters who want to better understand the impacts of abortion restrictions on high-risk pregnant people and MFMs. One powerful way for MFMs to influence public policy and public understanding of abortion is to share their lived experiences. Recognizing that many MFMs may not be permitted to and/or are hesitant to describe what is happening with their patients in public forums, SMFM has created an anonymous story collection tool. [Learn more and share your story here.](#)

Contact Your State Legislators

January 21st of this year should have marked the 50th Anniversary of Roe v. Wade. Unfortunately, it marked seven months since the Supreme Court ruled in Dobbs v. Jackson that abortion is not guaranteed as a right by the US Constitution, effectively banning medical care for millions of people across the country, including for those experiencing high-risk pregnancies.

The last seven months have been challenging – for patients, for families, for clinicians, for advocates. But these challenges have also provided an opportunity to promote sound policies that ensure abortion is not only legal but also accessible and stigma-free.

But we can't do it alone. We need your help – your expertise, your experience, your power, and your enthusiasm.

[Contact your state legislators today:](#) offer yourself as a resource, build relationships with them and their staff, and let them know what you have always known – Roe was always the floor, never the ceiling. Your patients deserve access to the full spectrum of reproductive health care services, including abortion care.

NEW LEGAL RESOURCE: ABORTION DEFENSE NETWORK

The [Abortion Defense Network](#) can connect you to the legal resources needed to navigate a post-Roe landscape. Managed by the [Lawyering Project](#) in partnership with the [American Civil Liberties Union](#), [Center for Reproductive Rights \(CRR\)](#), [If/When/How: Lawyering for Reproductive Justice](#), [National Women's Law Center \(NWLC\)](#), and [Resources for Abortion Delivery \(RAD\)](#), the Abortion Defense Network connects abortion providers and supporters with values-aligned attorneys prepared to provide legal advice, representation in criminal proceedings, representation in civil proceedings, and legal defense funds that cover attorney fees and other legal expenses. Anyone in the U.S. working to provide or support abortion can seek assistance from the Abortion Defense Network.

If you have a legal need, please visit the [Abortion Defense Network website](#) and complete the intake form. Once you submit the form, an attorney navigator will contact you within 24 hours. They will assess your legal needs and connect you with a legal service provider who can help. This may be an attorney from one of the six collaborating organizations, an attorney from an allied state organization, an attorney from the private bar who has been vetted and trained to provide legal services to abortion providers and supporters, or a legal defense fund.

SMFM AND PARTNER RESOURCES

[SMFM Special Statement](#) – [A critical examination of abortion terminology as it relates to access and quality of care](#)

[Guttmacher](#) – New Research and Policy Analyses:

- [Eight Ways State Policymakers Can Protect and Expand Abortion Rights and Access in 2023](#)
- [Inequity in US Abortion Rights and Access: The End of Roe is Deepening Existing Divides](#)
- [Pregnant People in the United States Seeking Abortion Do Not See Abortion as an Alternative](#)

WHAT WE'RE READING

["The 2023 State Legislative Sessions: The Next Abortion Battleground,"](#) *Health Affairs*

["The abortion battle has moved to your local court,"](#) *The Hill*

["As Abortion Measures Loom, GOP Raises New Barriers to Ballot Initiatives,"](#) *Pew Charitable Trusts*

["Bleeding and in pain, she couldn't get 2 Louisiana ERs to answer: Is it a miscarriage?"](#) *NPR*

["Doctors recount 'heart-wrenching' stories in new study on medical care post-Roe,"](#) *States Newsroom*

["Her baby has a deadly diagnosis. Her Florida doctors refused an abortion,"](#) *The Washington Post*

["How Dobbs Upended Med Students' Futures,"](#) *The Cut*

["I cried with her': the diary of a doctor navigating a total abortion ban,"](#) *The Guardian*

["Restricted abortion access linked to increased suicide in younger women,"](#) *The Hill*

["You Know What? I'm Not Doing This Anymore.,"](#) *Slate*

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