

THE NETWORK NEWSLETTER

A Health Policy and Advocacy Update - *September 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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UPCOMING EVENTS

Reproductive Health Project Convening

SMFM Reproductive Health Project will be hosting a **members-only virtual convening** on **Tuesday, September 26, at Noon ET** to exchange strategies for navigating the impacts of abortion restrictions on MFM practice. Registration information can be found [here](#).

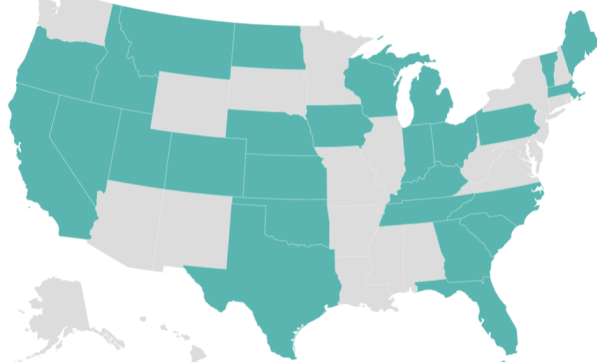
[REGISTER HERE](#)

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](#)



Indiana – SLN members **Drs. Carrie Rouse** and **Sherrine Ibrahim** published an [op-ed about Indiana's abortion ban and its impact on patients](#).

Iowa – HPAC and SLN member **Dr. Andrea Greiner** has been working behind the scenes to keep abortion legal. Currently, an [abortion ban is blocked by the courts](#).

Massachusetts – SLN members, including **Drs. Allison Bryant** and **Chloe Zera**, successfully lobbied for [additional funding for Massachusetts' Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review](#)

[Committee](#). Governor Maura Healey signed the FY2024 budget on August 9, which included \$350,000 for the MMRC

Ohio – Dr. David Hackney and other SMFM members continue to champion the ballot measure that would ensure access to reproductive health care, including abortion.

Utah – HPAC and SLN member Dr. Marcela Smid and SMFM members Drs. Torri Metz, Michelle Debbink, and Ann Bruno co-authored an [op-ed on the maternal mortality crisis](#).

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. In June, SMFM joined colleagues at ACOG and the AMA in an [amicus brief](#) to the **South Carolina** Supreme Court, as well as in an [amicus brief](#) to the **Ohio** Supreme Court.

Later in the month, we joined an [amicus brief](#) to the fifth circuit court of appeals in the case of *Braidwood Management v. Becerra*. The brief outlines the importance of providing preventive service without cost-sharing, especially for obstetric patients.

In July, SMFM joined ACOG, AMA, and many other medical groups in an [amicus brief](#) filed in a district court in **Texas** in *Fund Texas Choice v. Garza*.

Legislative Advocacy

In July, SMFM [released a statement](#) condemning **Indiana's** abortion ban. A few days later, we sent a letter to the **Iowa** legislature opposing an abortion ban, Senate Study Bill 1223. While the bill passed and was enacted by the Governor, a [judge blocked it just a few days later](#).

Later that month, SMFM joined several other health care organizations to [call attention](#) to policies in **Idaho** that threaten maternal health.

Regulatory Advocacy

In June, SMFM joined 5 other OB/GYN specialty societies in a [letter to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#) commenting on proposed regulations strengthening disclosure requirements for protected health information related to reproductive health care.

Last month, SMFM joined ACOG and SFP in submitting comments to the **Colorado** State Medical Board for consideration during its legislatively mandated assessment of so-called “abortion reversal.”

STATE HAPPENINGS

Perinatal health advancements

Last month, **Massachusetts** [Governor Maura Healey signed the FY2024 budget](#), which included an additional \$350,000 for the state’s Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee.

Celebrating abortion access wins

At the end of June, **New York** [Governor Kathy Hochul signed a new law](#) to protect abortion providers who use telemedicine to prescribe abortion medication.

An **Iowa** [judge blocked a new abortion ban](#) just days after it was signed by Governor Kim Reynolds, who convened the legislature for a special session to specifically pass a ban.

Maine [Governor Janet Mills signed a new law expanding access to abortion later in pregnancy](#). This law amended a clause in existing statute that stated abortions after “viability” were only permitted to save the life of the pregnant patient. Now, abortion after viability is at the discretion of physicians.

In a special election in August, [Ohio voters rejected a ballot measure](#) that would have increased the vote threshold for citizen-led ballot measures from 50% to 60%. This measure was pushed forward by anti-abortion advocates and politicians to prevent the November ballot measure on reproductive health from passing.

In early September, [21 bills packaged as the “Reproductive Health Act” were introduced](#) in the **Michigan** House and Senate. Among the bills is an act to remove the 24-hour waiting period for abortion.

Last week, [California passed a shield law to protect clinicians who provide abortion and gender-affirming care](#) from insurance penalties if they are penalized by a state with restrictions.

Yesterday, Planned Parenthood of **Wisconsin** [resumed operations at two clinics](#). This comes two months after a [judge signaled that they did not believe the 1849 law bans abortion](#).

Monitoring abortion bans and restrictions

At the end of June, the [Indiana Supreme Court upheld the state’s abortion ban](#), claiming the constitution only provides limited protections. While the ACLU of Indiana petitioned the court for a new hearing, this was ultimately denied. The ban went into effect on August 21.

The [South Carolina Supreme Court upheld the state’s 6-week ban](#) at the end of August in a 4-1 decision.

As of September 15, 2023, 21 states have abortion bans up to 20 weeks gestation currently or soon to be in effect: **Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, and West Virginia.**

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

In 6 states, courts are determining if existing or new bans can take effect: **Arizona, Iowa, Montana, 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](#).

TAKE ACTION

Contact Your Legislators

State-based maternal mortality review committees (MMRCs) are essential to addressing the nation’s maternal mortality crisis and reducing inequities in maternal health outcomes. They allow clinicians, health systems, and public health officials to focus their efforts and resources on the leading causes of maternal mortality.

Champions in the House of Representatives have introduced the **Preventing Maternal Deaths Reauthorization Act of 2023 (H.R. 3838)**, which will renew federal grants to state-based MMRCs and continue efforts to strengthen review committees. Join SMFM in building support for H.R. 3838 by [asking your Representative to cosponsor the bill](#).

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.](#)

Track Policies and Submit a Request for Advocacy Support

Get more involved in advocacy in your state by [tracking policies alongside SMFM staff](#) and using our [Request Support form](#) to get assistance from Advocacy staff.

SMFM AND PARTNER RESOURCES

Advocacy Hub

SMFM's [Advocacy Hub](#) 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.



Guttmacher: Monthly Abortion Provision Study

In response to the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, the Guttmacher Institute has launched a new research initiative to track monthly estimates of medication and procedural abortions provided within the formal US health care system. [The Monthly Abortion Provision Study interactive resource](#) currently shows monthly data from January to June 2023 and is designed to help measure the impacts of abortion policies on state-level abortion incidence and trends.

WHAT WE'RE READING

["Abortion bans are fueling a rise in high-risk patients heading to Illinois hospitals,"](#) *NPR*

["As Abortion Laws Drive Obstetricians From Red States, Maternity Care Suffers,"](#) *New York Times*

["Dispute over an all-trimester abortion clinic puts California's image as haven to the test,"](#) *Los Angeles Times*

["Eight women had serious pregnancy complications. Now they're suing over state abortion bans,"](#) *States Newsroom*

["Idaho educators file federal lawsuit over 'no public funds for abortion' law,"](#) *States Newsroom*

["In Poland, Testing Women for Abortion Drugs Is a Reality. It Could Happen Here."](#) *New York Times*

["Landmark Study Surveys Reproductive Experiences of Deaf Women,"](#) *Rewire News*

["New Health Department program puts nurses in the homes of high-risk moms, babies in Mississippi,"](#) *Mississippi Today*

["No OB-GYNs left in town: what came after Idaho's assault on abortion,"](#) *The Guardian*

["Pa. health care providers tell lawmakers the state's rural hospitals are in crisis,"](#)
Pennsylvania Capital-Star

["Why Aren't Disabled Stories Included in Abortion Ban Conversations?"](#) *Rewire News*

["Woman gives birth alone in jail cell an hour after seeking medical help,"](#) *Washington Post*

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Please share any feedback or items for future newsletters directly with Samantha Berg,
SMFM's State Advocacy Manager ([*sberg@smfm.org*](mailto:sberg@smfm.org))

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Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine
409 12th Street, SW, Suite 601, Washington, DC 20024