

THE NETWORK NEWSLETTER

Together advancing policies and implementing public health initiatives

smfmadvocates.org

A Health Policy and Advocacy Update - *September 2026*

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.

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GET OUT THE VOTE



The 2026 general election is fast approaching, and SMFM is focused on helping enhance the civic health of our members and communities. As part of those efforts, we are re-launching our **Get Out the Vote** landing page, originally developed in 2024 and updated for the upcoming November election. We encourage you to explore the resources and also order your free voter registration badge from our partner, **Vot-ER**, a nonpartisan organization who focuses specifically on voter registration in healthcare settings.

[Learn More and Get Involved](#)

CONNECT WITH YOUR COLLEAGUES

In response to member requests to have an easy and quick way to connect with other MFM advocates and public health leaders in their states, SMFM has launched the **State**

Liaison Network WhatsApp Community, which includes separate chats for each state. We hope this will be a space for information sharing, collaboration, and support as you and your colleagues advocate in your institutions, your states, and at the federal level.

To ensure the community remains useful for members, we've created a list of dos and don'ts, which you can find linked [here](#).

To join the WhatsApp Community and self-select into your state group chat, email Samantha Berg, Senior Manager of Advocacy at sberg@smfm.org

Please note that this community is only open to SLN members. If you were forwarded this newsletter, please sign up for the SLN before joining the WhatsApp Community.

LATEST FEDERAL POLICY UPDATES - UPCOMING WEBINAR



SMFM will host our next Washington, DC Update on **Thursday, December 10**, at **2:00 PM ET**. We'll break down our advocacy efforts, current legislative priorities, and regulatory changes that could impact your practice and patients. Join us to stay informed and prepare for what's ahead in perinatal care.

Register Today

Interested in watching our Washington, DC Update from August? [Check out the recording](#).

TAKE ACTION

Help Ensure Affordable, Quality Pregnancy Care

Pregnancy and postpartum care can leave families facing high out-of-pocket costs at a time when they should be focused on their health and well-being. The Supporting Healthy Moms and Babies Act ([S. 1834/H.R. 3762](#)) would help address this challenge.

The legislation would strengthen maternal health coverage by expanding the Affordable Care Act's Essential Health Benefits requirements to include comprehensive prenatal, labor and delivery, neonatal, perinatal, and postpartum care for up to one year after birth. It would also eliminate patient cost-sharing for these services, helping ensure that families can access the care they need without financial barriers.

SMFM urges you to contact your Senators and Representative and ask them to cosponsor the Supporting Healthy Moms and Babies Act to help improve access to affordable, high-quality pregnancy care for families nationwide.

Write Your Legislators

Submit a Request for Advocacy Support

Get more involved in advocacy by [tracking policies alongside SMFM staff](#) and using our [request support form](#) to get assistance from SMFM advocacy staff.

SMFM ACTIONS AND UPDATES



SMFM continues to advocate for you and your patients on federal and state levels. You can see all of our advocacy efforts by visiting the [Advocacy Activities and Updates](#) page on our Advocacy Hub.

Since our last newsletter, we have met with federal officials; filed legal briefs; and penned or joined letters, statements, and press releases, including:

- **July 29, 2026:** SMFM submitted [comments](#) on the Medicaid Community Engagement Requirement interim final rule, urging CMS to clarify ambiguity in the rule that could otherwise create unnecessary administrative burden and coverage gaps for pregnant Medicaid enrollees.
- **July 23, 2026:** SMFM joined partner organizations in a [letter](#) opposing anti-abortion riders in the House FY27 Defense and Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations packages
- **July 14, 2026:** SMFM joined partners in a [letter](#) to Senate HELP and House Energy & Commerce leadership requesting markup of the Rural Obstetrics Readiness Act, which would fund obstetric emergency training, equipment grants, and teleconsultation for rural facilities lacking labor and delivery units.
- **July 10, 2026:** SMFM submitted [comments](#) outlining how the nation's maternal and child health promotion infrastructure would be negatively affected by a proposed rule from the US Office of Management and Budget that would modify regulations governing federal financial assistance, such as grants and cooperative agreements.

STATE HAPPENINGS

Most state legislatures are out of session for 2026. You can check if your state is still in session [here](#). Below are state policy updates, including legislation that has recently passed.

Perinatal health advancements

- **California:** [SB 626](#) standardizes and strengthens perinatal mental health screening, referral, and treatment requirements for health care providers and insurers, aligning practices with current clinical guidelines and improving care coordination for pregnant and postpartum individuals.



Abortion care updates

- **California:** [AB 1930](#) strengthens privacy protections for abortion and gender-affirming care by requiring notice to the Attorney General before certain records are disclosed in response to out-of-state legal requests and establishing penalties for improper efforts to obtain protected health information.
- **California:** [AB 2448](#) strengthens medical privacy protections by requiring electronic health record vendors and related businesses to implement safeguards that restrict access to and protect records related to abortion care, contraception, and gender-affirming care.
- **California:** [AB 2531](#) expands access to abortion care and contraception services for veterans by making eligible uninsured or underinsured veterans able to receive no-

cost or reduced-cost care through California's reproductive health equity programs and increasing outreach to connect veterans with available services.

- **Massachusetts:** [H 5595](#) expands abortion care access in Massachusetts by allowing physicians to provide abortion care based on their professional judgment and prohibits external review processes from overruling physician and patient decisions.
- **Missouri:** [SB 999](#) expands civil and criminal penalties related to abortion care, requires care for "born alive infants" after abortion care, and classifies any overt acts that result in the death of a "born alive infant" as first-degree murder.
- **New Jersey:** [S 2260](#) strengthens protections for reproductive and gender-affirming health care by shielding patients and providers from out-of-state investigations, enhancing privacy protections, and creating penalties for harassment, intimidation, or obstruction at healthcare facilities.

Monitoring abortion care bans

As of September 10, 2026, **20** states have abortion bans up to 18 weeks gestation:

Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Nebraska, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, and West Virginia.

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

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](#).

PARTNER RESOURCES

March of Dimes – Nowhere to Go: Maternity Care Deserts Across the U.S. 2026 Report

March of Dimes recently released its [2026 Maternity Care Deserts Report](#), which examines access to maternity care nationwide and identifies communities facing the greatest barriers to care. The report finds that more than 5.8 million women have limited access to maternity services and highlights how hospital closures, shortages of obstetric clinicians, and geographic disparities are contributing to growing challenges for pregnant people and their families.

National Partnership for Women & Families – Rural Health Transformation Program: Issue Briefs

The National Partnership for Women & Families released a two-part analysis of the federal Rural Health Transformation Program. [Part 1](#) examines how the program falls short of addressing the unique maternity care challenges rural communities face. [Part 2](#) outlines policy solutions to better support pregnant and postpartum patients.

National Partnership for Women & Families – HIPAA Turns 30, but Its Protections Fall Short

The National Partnership for Women & Families published a [new blog](#) marking the 30th anniversary of HIPAA and examining gaps in health privacy protections in the digital age. The piece argues that HIPAA has not kept pace with modern technologies, leaving sensitive health information collected through apps, wearables, location tracking, and other digital tools vulnerable to misuse, surveillance, and exploitation, and calls for stronger federal privacy protections.

Policy Center for Maternal Mental Health – 2026 Maternal Mental Health State Report Cards

The Policy Center for Maternal Mental Health released its new [State Report Cards](#), which evaluate maternal mental health care systems across all 50 states using measures related to screening, treatment access, policy, payment, and parental support. The analysis found that the U.S. earned an overall grade of C, no state received an A, and

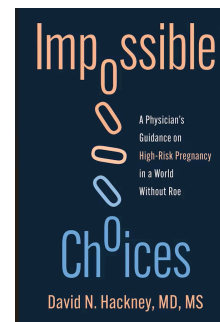
states continue to face significant challenges in ensuring families have access to the mental health care and support they need throughout pregnancy and postpartum.

State Liaisons In Action

Florida - Dr. Washington Hill penned an [op-ed in the Sarasota Herald-Tribune](#) highlighting the importance of birthright citizenship and its role in ensuring dignity, opportunity, and equal protection for children born in the United States. Drawing on his experience caring for pregnant patients and newborns, Dr. Hill argues that birthright citizenship is a longstanding constitutional principle that supports families' health and well-being regardless of immigration status.

Idaho - In [Seyb v. Idaho Board of Medicine](#), Boise maternal-fetal medicine (MFM) specialist Dr. Stacy Seyb successfully challenged portions of Idaho's abortion ban, with a federal court ruling that abortions must be permitted in some cases where continued pregnancy poses serious risks to a patient's health or life. However, a federal appeals court has temporarily paused that injunction while the case proceeds, leaving Idaho's abortion restrictions fully in effect pending further review.

Ohio - "[Impossible Choices: A Physician's Guidance on High-Risk Pregnancy in a World Without Roe](#)" by David N. Hackney, MD, a former member of SMFM's Health Policy and Advocacy Committee, examines the complex medical and ethical decisions facing patients and clinicians after the Dobbs decision, with a focus on high-risk pregnancy complications and abortion restrictions. The book offers practical guidance and perspectives on navigating pregnancy in an increasingly challenging legal landscape.



WHAT WE'RE READING

["Dozens of States Tried to Roll Back Vaccine Laws. Here's How They Fared,"](#) *The New York Times*

["Dr. Erica Schwartz Confirmed as CDC Director, Filling a Leadership Vacuum,"](#) *NPR*

["Losing Our Lens on Maternal and Infant Health: The Consequences of Disrupting PRAMS,"](#) *JAMA Health Forum*

["Medicaid's Work Requirement Crunch Arrives,"](#) *Axios*

["The Dangerous Unraveling of the United States' Family Planning Safety Net,"](#) *Health Affairs Forefront*

["Trends in Pregnancy-Related Mortality in the United States: Pregnancy Mortality Surveillance System, 2005-2024,"](#) *Obstetrics & Gynecology*

["Trump Expands Family, Medical Leave Benefits: Here's Who Can Get It,"](#) *Newsweek*

["Out-of-State Travel for Abortion Care Before and After the Dobbs v Jackson Decision,"](#) *JAMA Network Open*

["Walking Through the Door Dobbs Left Open: A Groundbreaking Idaho Case Tests Whether the Constitution Protects a Pregnant Woman's Right to Self-Preservation,"](#) *Ms. Magazine*

["What I Learned Going From Doula to OB-GYN,"](#) *STAT*

["Who Gets Healthcare and Who Gets Handcuffs?,"](#) *Ms. Magazine*

"Why Doctors Say Abortion Bans Are Worsening Medical Care During Miscarriages," *PBS NewsHour*

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Please share any feedback or items for future newsletters directly with Samantha Berg, SMFM's Senior Manager of Advocacy (sberg@smfm.org)

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