

Testimony of Misha Pangasa, MD, MSCI, FACOG
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Before the U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution
“Chaos and Confusion: Examining the Patchwork of Abortion Restrictions Across
America Since *Dobbs*”
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Good Morning, Chair Butler, Ranking Member Cruz, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee on the Constitution. My name is Dr. Misha Pangasa, I use she/her pronouns and I am a board-certified, fellowship trained, obstetrician and gynecologist providing full spectrum reproductive health care. I am a fellow with Physicians for Reproductive Health, a proud physician who provides abortion care, and a proud Arizonan – it is an honor to care for my community here in Phoenix.

I became a doctor because of my commitment to care for people without judgment throughout the course of their lives. For me, that commitment includes caring for people throughout the many different roads traveled to create the families they desire - whether that is optimizing their health, delivering their babies, or supporting them as they end a pregnancy. Whether I am caring for someone who is ready to build or create a family, already parenting, grieving due to an unexpected pregnancy diagnosis, or caring for someone who does not want to be pregnant, all of my patients have something in common – they are making thoughtful decisions about their health and well-being. Each of them deserves high quality health care throughout their pregnancies no matter who they are or where they live.

My priority is to deliver high quality health care to all my patients no matter the direction their reproductive journeys take them, but geographic, legislative, and politically motivated barriers to abortion care have made delivering high quality health care to patients in Arizona challenging. Abortion care is safe, life-saving, necessary, compassionate and essential and none of the arbitrary barriers or bans imposed by politicians make it any safer. The biggest threat to patient safety is the litany of medically unnecessary regulations that raise costs and delay procedures, ultimately putting patients’ health at risk.

Unfortunately, the escalating abortion bans and restrictions in states and the Supreme Court’s decision in *Dobbs*, which overturned the constitutional right to abortion, has wreaked havoc on communities across the country. In Arizona, we have been subjected to a constantly shifting legal landscape and the ever looming threat of a complete abortion ban. While I am still able to care for many people early in their pregnancies, people in Arizona are being forced to wait further into their pregnancies, and to travel farther and farther away from their communities to get basic, essential health care that I should be able to provide for them here at home. They wonder whether tomorrow, next week, or next month they will still have options if faced with a pregnancy complication. They wonder if I will be able to care for them, or have to send them to another state if they find themselves in a situation in which abortion is right for them — and this is assuming they have the resources or immigration status to travel. They wonder whether I’ll even be allowed to counsel them through all their options, or if I’ll be threatened with a lawsuit or prison time for even bringing up the possibility of abortion, like providers in other states have been. I see and hear their fear about the future every day. And for those I’ve already sent away - the people who aren’t able to meet the arbitrary criteria for abortion care in Arizona, who I know

do not have the means necessary to pay for the travel, childcare, or time off from work, their faces still haunt me.

We know that even before the *Dobbs* decision, thousands of people did not have access to abortion care, and we know the impact that has on their lives. Reputable, large scale, scientific studies have shown us that people who are denied an abortion are more likely to experience serious medical conditions during the end of pregnancy; more likely to remain in relationships with a violent partner, and are less likely to be able to lift themselves out of poverty and provide for the basic needs of their families and the children they already have.

As more states continue to ban or severely restrict access to abortion, the ripple effects continue to compound and impact other types of essential health care. For example, we've already seen vague language being misconstrued to limit access to emergency contraception and IUDs. We've seen people forced to bleed and miscarry on their own because of other providers' fear that medication or procedures could be misconstrued as an abortion. We've seen cancer care delayed or withheld because of abortion bans and treatments for autoimmune disorders not offered because of the possibility of any implication in abortion care. We've seen extremist abortion laws banning IVF.

We also know that these restrictions to basic health care affect the health of our country more broadly, especially because of the harm on the provider workforce. Doctors and other health care professionals have been forced to make decisions about leaving their homes, or not coming back to the communities they call home, because they know they won't be able to practice evidence-based care. Training opportunities in sexual and reproductive health care for those in restrictive states have diminished and become even more difficult to access. And these states often are those with existing provider shortages, where a lack of skilled providers only exacerbates poor health outcomes for these communities, especially communities of color already facing additional barriers to care.

Despite all of these threats, I am unwavering in my commitment to support people in my home and my community in whatever way I can. It shouldn't have to be this way. People should get care in their own communities, in a manner that is best for them, with the people they trust.

Thank you for having me here today. I look forward to your questions.