

I am Yasmein Ziyad, a 44-year-old native of Atlanta, GA, currently residing in Morrow, GA.

In 2016, I met the man of my dreams, and in 2020, we were excited to find out we were expecting our first child together. Unfortunately, at 11 weeks, we experienced a miscarriage – the fetus stopped growing at 9 weeks, 4 days. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, medical interventions were limited. The doctors administered vaginal pills and provided additional oral medication to manage the miscarriage at home. I was told to expect cramping and bleeding within a few hours and was advised to take ibuprofen for the pain.

Soon after, I began experiencing excruciating pain in my lower abdomen and back, with the pain radiating down to my legs. It was so intense that it forced me to stop everything. Suddenly, I felt a large mass pass from my body. I rushed to the restroom, and when I sat down, I discovered a large, bloody, fleshy mass. Overwhelmed, I started screaming and crying. My significant other ran into the bathroom, and through tears, I shakily handed him my blood-stained undergarments, begging him to take them away because I couldn't bear it.

Over the next two years, in 2021 and 2022, we endured two additional miscarriages, both caused by chromosomal abnormalities. Due to the trauma I experienced during the first miscarriage, my doctor performed D&C procedures for the subsequent losses.

After experiencing three miscarriages, we decided to change healthcare providers, leaving a large hospital system for a doctor I trusted.

Upon meeting with him, he immediately began working with us on treatments to conceive. We went through one round of IUI. About a month before our second round was scheduled, we spontaneously became pregnant. This news was exciting, given our previous experiences. We were confident this was our rainbow baby.

When I called the doctor's office to share the news, they asked me to come in immediately to confirm the pregnancy. We found out we were 4 weeks and 4 days pregnant. The doctor advised me that because of my age, it was a high-risk pregnancy and suggested I take it easy. He wanted to monitor me weekly to ensure everything was progressing well.

As I left the office, concerns about the abortion ban filled my mind because I knew that as an older mother, I was at higher risk of miscarriage or complications, and I began to worry. When I shared my fears with my fiancé, he reassured me, saying, "We're going to stay positive. We gone have this baby." His words gave me hope. I started to embrace the pregnancy, excited for the journey ahead.

That weekend, I noticed light brown spotting and immediately panicked. I texted my doctor, and he told me to take progesterone suppositories, be on bed rest, and come in first thing Monday morning. At the appointment, the fetus showed growth. The doctor reassured me that everything was fine and wanted me to remain on bed rest, with weekly checkups to monitor my progress.

However, at my six-week checkup, we learned the fetus had stopped growing, and there was no detectable heartbeat. I broke down, knowing that we were likely experiencing another miscarriage. The doctor tried to comfort me, explaining that sometimes the heartbeat wasn't detectable until the seventh week. He reminded me that my blood levels were still improving and that stress could negatively affect the pregnancy. He urged me to have faith and not to lose hope. With those words, I left the office—heartbroken but clinging to a thread of faith.

The following week, there was still no growth or heartbeat. I asked about a D&C, but the doctor said it required a second confirmation and that the hospital had better equipment to confirm a miscarriage. After the nurse at the hospital performed the ultrasound she informed me that there was no heartbeat, and my doctor would follow up with me with the results.

At my follow-up appointment, which would have me at 8 weeks, the doctor confirmed the miscarriage. I asked again about the D&C, and he spoke around the topic, then stated “These laws. I don't want to lose my license or be arrested” and recommended that my body handle the process naturally, “it was healthier,” he said. He mentioned using the pills would cause too much bleeding and sent me home, advising me to call when it started. Confused, on the way home I searched online and found that the abortion laws were unclear and left doctors unsure of how to properly treat miscarriages.

I sought advice, calling the emergency room, and Planned Parenthood only to be told that I had to follow my doctor's advice. Planned Parenthood told me that they could not help with the miscarriage due to our new state law and the time frame I was in for my pregnancy, and that I could try a clinic in another state, but it was a possibility I would get turned away due to not being a resident. I called a clinic in North Carolina and was told they only treat patients who live in the state. I even joined miscarriage support groups to try to find other resources, but that was not successful. With no other option, I had no choice but to let the miscarriage happen naturally.

A week later, I started to experience severe cramping and pains. A few days later, I began to bleed. I was experiencing severe pain as the cramps were strong enough to stop me from doing anything. The doctor had me lay down on the table, and he performed a pelvic exam, which caused further pain in my vaginal area. I voiced how painful it was. He then said he knew why I was in so much pain, there were clots and tissue in my cervix, “I'll get it out, and you will feel better.” He then turned to the cabinet behind him, pulled out what looked like a large pair of metal scissors, and inserted them into my vaginal area, which caused me to scream out and cry uncontrollably. This procedure, where the doctor removed tissue without giving me any pain medication, was by far worse than what I went through when I had a D&C. I cried out “Please, I don't want to do this anymore, Please stop!” To only be met with “I can't work like this.” At that point, the doctor stopped the procedure and the nurse gave me two Ibuprofen 800. My body was shaking from having gone through so much pain.

About 30 minutes later, the doctor came back into the room. He told me it was just a little bit more to remove. I was unaware I had to go through more of this and told him I didn't want to continue; it hurt too bad. He told me he had to do it, “We don't want to have an infection” and proceeded back to remove what was left in my cervix. When he finished, he said, “We got it all out, you should feel better soon.” He apologized for having to perform the procedure and told me

he was trying to help. I was then sent home, and to come back on Monday for a follow-up to ensure it was all completely gone.

I left the office, devastated and physically sore, and called my fiancé, crying. That evening, his cousin, a midwife, visited and was horrified by what I'd gone through. She advised using Blue and Black Cohosh Root, herbs that aid in childbirth, to help expel the remaining tissue. Following her advice, I rescheduled my appointment, and by the time I returned, the doctor found no remaining tissue.

I didn't have to go through this. These laws created so much fear and confusion that I couldn't get the care I needed, that would have spared me so much pain and suffering. As a result of what I went through, we have given up on trying to get pregnant.