

June 1, 2023

Open Letter to Oregon Legislators:

We are a group of pediatricians, obstetricians and family medicine doctors from across the state urging the passage of House Bill (HB) 2002, the Reproductive Health and Access to Care Bill. We are primary care providers and subspecialists dedicated to the health, safety, and well-being of infants, children, adolescents, and young adults.

We are proud to be strong supporters of this measure, which seeks to expand and protect access to vital reproductive health services by clarifying the law for providers and expanding access to care in underserved areas in the state. It also requires insurance companies to cover gender-affirming care, which the [American Academy of Pediatrics \(representing almost 70,000 American pediatricians\) fully supports.](#)

As we've followed the conversation around this bill, it has become clear to us that most people do not understand what happens in the exam room or in conversations between providers and their patients, along with patients' families. We hope this letter clarifies how important this bill is.

HB 2002 puts patient health and safety **first** by ensuring providers are able to deliver high-quality care to their patients without unnecessary barriers.

The legislation improves access to emergency contraception and abortion services on college campuses. We know not all students can afford this

care, and many are forced to go off-campus to receive this care every month, inconveniencing students and interfering with their coursework. The bill also closes gaps in care that young people in rural communities experience.

Importantly, the bill gives legal protections for providers who face uncertainty as neighboring states like Idaho criminalize abortion and gender-affirming care. HB 2002 also includes physical safety protections for providers. Without these protections, providers cannot effectively serve their patients.

This bill also protects providers' ability to give confidential abortion care for pre-teens and adolescents when needed, particularly for those who have been sexually assaulted or abused. As providers, we believe young people deserve compassion, understanding, and support during what could be a defining moment in their life.

The vast majority of young people would involve a parent in care decisions and those who do not have reasons that include abuse or neglect.

Physicians will always seek to involve parents in healthcare discussions *when it is safe for the youth*. Requiring parental involvement could put young people who are victims of sexual abuse in harm's way and prevent them from receiving the timely and critical care they need, resulting in psychological harm. It is also extremely important that minors who are pregnant receive immediate care without unnecessary barriers due to the

physical toll pregnancy takes on their bodies.

In the extremely rare (and heartbreaking) case where it is not safe for the young person to have their parents involved, there is still a standard of care to provide a clear safety plan for that patient, including connecting a patient with a trusted, caring adult. Healthcare providers are trained to screen carefully and take action when there are any signs or history of abuse, neglect, trafficking, or sexual violence. These are very difficult circumstances that licensed healthcare professionals are trained to navigate with the health and safety of their young patient in mind.

We are also extremely concerned about the proposed legal ruling requirement (a so-called judicial bypass system) for adolescents who do not feel safe notifying their parents. To leave a decision so significant, and, in many cases, life-saving, up to the whims of a judge rather than a trusted medical provider and their patient is downright cruel. This is not a viable alternative, as it limits providers' ability to deliver timely care. This system is also highly punitive and largely inaccessible for people without resources, those who have experienced trauma like sexual assault, and those in rural communities who already lack sufficient access to the courts.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has consistently held that no minor should be required to seek parental approval to receive reproductive care, including an abortion, writing, "Legislation mandating parental involvement does not achieve the intended benefit of promoting family communication." The American Medical Association, the Society for

Adolescent Health and Medicine, the American Public Health Association, and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists have all concurred. The AAP offers a similar caution about requiring judicial bypass for minors who do not want to involve a parent, warning they “risk causing medical and psychological harm to the pregnant adolescent.”

We urge the Legislature to listen to pediatric providers and promptly pass HB 2002. For our patients and Oregon’s communities, this simply cannot wait.

Sincerely,

[Names have been redacted to protect provider safety.]