

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5051
MINORITY (202) 225-5074
<https://oversight.house.gov>

Opening Statement of Chairwoman Carolyn B. Maloney Hearing on “Examining the Harm to Patients from Abortion Restrictions and the Threat of a National Abortion Ban” September 29, 2022

Let me begin by taking a moment to acknowledge the ongoing devastation caused by Hurricane Ian.

My thoughts are with the people of Florida and the surrounding communities being affected by this dangerous storm. I hope that everyone impacted will stay safe and quickly receive the resources they need, and I’m grateful to all the first responders and the local, state, and federal officials who are working around the clock to respond to this natural disaster.

Today’s hearing is the fourth I have held to examine the decades-long efforts by Republican politicians to bulldoze abortion rights straight into the ground.

Since the Supreme Court’s decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization*, Republican-led states have [rushed](#) to impose draconian abortion bans that take away freedom and the right of women to make decisions about their own health care including reproductive health care, with more bans taking effect almost every week.

Just last Friday, a judge reinstated an abortion ban in Arizona that was originally passed in 1901.

Let that sink in—a law banning abortion from more than a century ago, before women won the right to vote, is now back in effect.

Republicans are turning back the clock on women’s rights—back to a time when women were not viewed as equal citizens, and when they had no control over their own bodies.

More than 33 million women of reproductive age live in states hostile to abortion. In most of these states, abortion is now severely restricted or outright banned.

This means that roughly half of the women in America live in states that rob them of their fundamental freedom to make decisions about their bodies.

This stands in stark contrast to other countries—like Ireland, Argentina, New Zealand, and Mexico—all of which are expanding women’s right to an abortion.

Today, we’ll hear directly from a patient and doctors who will share their firsthand accounts of accessing abortion care, the barriers being erected in their states, and the harms caused by taking away this fundamental right.

We will hear that abortion bans prevent doctors from exercising their professional judgment about what their patients need, out of fear of being charged with a crime. Some doctors have reported having to wait until their patients are close to death before they can provide emergency care.

For example, one woman in Texas who suffered a miscarriage was forced to carry fetal remains for two weeks because doctors denied her care due to Texas's abortion ban.

Another Texas woman had to prove that an infection was killing her before doctors would agree she was in enough danger to terminate her lethal pregnancy.

This is horrifying—and Republicans aren't done yet.

Because it turns out, Republicans aren't satisfied with states banning abortion. They want to ban abortion [nationwide](#).

Earlier this month, Senator Lindsey Graham introduced a bill to ban abortion anywhere in the United States after 15 weeks, and imprison doctors and nurses who provide abortion care. In the House, nearly 100 House Republicans—including the Ranking Member and many of the Republicans on this Committee—have cosponsored this extreme bill.

And a [new memo](#) released by this Committee today reveals that during just this Congress alone, congressional Republicans have introduced more than 50 separate measures to ban or restrict abortion nationwide.

Republicans are showing us the America they envision. It is a place that limits women's freedom, and imposes government control over our bodies and our choices. It is an America where a politician can force a woman to give birth against her will, regardless of the consequences for the woman and her family.

This chilling Republican vision is not what the American people want. The majority of people in the United States support abortion rights—and that support has only grown stronger since the extremist Supreme Court decision in *Dobbs*.

While Republicans are pushing to criminalize abortion nationwide, Democrats are fighting to protect the freedom of every person to make their own medical decisions—without interference from the state—and to protect the doctor-patient relationship.

That's why House Democrats passed the [Women's Health Protection Act](#)—which would establish a federal right to abortion—and the Ensuring Access to Abortion Act—which would safeguard a patient's right to travel across state lines to obtain abortion care. Unfortunately, Republicans overwhelmingly opposed both bills.

Democrats in Congress stand with the American people. We stand with women who want the autonomy to make their own health care decisions. Abortion is necessary health care and it must be accessible to all. We will not stand by while that freedom is stripped away from us.

I want to thank each of our witnesses for sharing their stories and for their bravery in coming before the Committee today. They are doing a tremendous service to their communities and to our nation.

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