

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

December 19, 2023

Representative Kay Granger  
Chairwoman  
House Appropriations Committee  
H-307, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Rosa DeLauro  
Ranking Member  
House Appropriations Committee  
1036 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Senator Patty Murray  
Chair  
Senate Appropriations Committee  
Room S-128, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator Susan Collins  
Vice Chair  
Senate Appropriations Committee  
Room S-146, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20510

RE: Reject Harmful Medical Training Rider in Final Appropriations Bill

Dear Chairwoman Granger, Ranking Member DeLauro, Chair Murray, and Vice Chair Collins:

We write in strong opposition to Section 541 of H.R. 5894, the House Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2024. This harmful provision would jeopardize federal funding for institutions that follow evidence-based accreditation requirements in offering critical postgraduate medical training in abortion care.<sup>1</sup> Notably, this attack is happening at the very same time that training for abortion care has become significantly more difficult to access in response to states banning and restricting abortion. This dangerous rider would further widen the gap in needed training for this essential health care. We strongly oppose Section 541 and believe it would exacerbate physician shortages, worsen maternal health outcomes, cost lives in our communities, and disrupt well-established medical education and training requirements.

Since the Supreme Court's *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* ("Dobbs") decision in 2022, we have heard from physician faculty and trainees across the country about the devastating impact of this ruling on medical education. In speaking to physicians who are training, teaching, and/or practicing in states that have banned or restricted abortion, we have learned more about the detrimental effects on medical education and training. These laws are interfering in the physician-patient relationship, restricting physicians' ability to offer evidence-based care, limiting educational opportunities for trainees, and putting physicians in legal peril.

A national survey of obstetricians and gynecologists (OB/GYNs) conducted since *Dobbs* found 55 percent believe it has worsened the ability to attract new OB/GYNs to the field.<sup>2</sup> In a congressional roundtable with physician faculty and trainees across the country, we learned that many applicants are balking at training in a state with abortion restrictions that don't allow physicians to provide patients with the full range of care. One

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<sup>1</sup> Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education, "ACGME Program Requirements for Graduate Medical Education in Obstetrics and Gynecology, effective July 1, 2023,"

[https://www.acgme.org/globalassets/pfassets/programrequirements/220\\_obstetricsandgynecology\\_2023.pdf](https://www.acgme.org/globalassets/pfassets/programrequirements/220_obstetricsandgynecology_2023.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Kaiser Family Foundation, "A National Survey of OBGYNs' Experiences After Dobbs," June 2023,

<https://www.kff.org/womens-health-policy/report/a-national-survey-of-obgyns-experiences-after-dobbs/>.

news article quoted the director of an OB/GYN residency program recalling an applicant who loved the program “but couldn’t risk gambling on her education in a state that limited the full spectrum of training.”<sup>3</sup>

Medical school applicants for residencies where training includes family planning or abortion care have dropped in states that have adopted restrictive abortion laws since *Dobbs*. A recent study found a 10.5 percent decrease in residency applications for OB/GYN programs in states with complete abortion bans compared to a 5.3 percent decrease in states without restrictions in 2023.<sup>4</sup> Another study found that family medicine programs, which include family planning and pregnancy counseling in their training, experienced a 7.4 percent decrease in states with complete abortion bans compared to a 3.6 percent decrease in states without restrictions in 2023.<sup>5</sup>

Since the *Dobbs* decision, the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) has reiterated that comprehensive family planning (including access to abortion training) has been an essential component of obstetrics and gynecology for decades and will remain a requirement in graduate medical education for this specialty. Such training is necessary for a physician to provide comprehensive reproductive health care, is “directly relevant to preserving the life and health of pregnant patients,” and will equip residents with the skills to handle other reproductive health care issues, including pregnancy-related emergencies and miscarriages.<sup>6</sup> Residency programs with restrictions on abortion care at their institutions must make arrangements for such resident experience to occur at another institution. Despite claims by our Republican colleagues that medical professionals are “being discriminated against for their religious or moral beliefs,”<sup>7</sup> ACGME explicitly states that residents who have a religious or moral objection may opt out of participating in training in or performing induced abortions.<sup>8</sup> ACGME standards require training programs to be structured such that residents have to “opt-out” rather than “opt-in” or the program will not be compliant, which is directly counter to Section 541.

Without access to consistent, comprehensive training, patient outcomes will suffer. Effective providers must be trained to handle a variety of medical scenarios of differing complexities. Nationally, 68 percent of OB/GYNs believe *Dobbs* has worsened their ability to manage miscarriages and other pregnancy-related medical emergencies, and 70 percent believe it has worsened racial and ethnic inequities in maternal health.<sup>9</sup> Abortion can be indicated in urgent medical situations such as pre-eclampsia, hemorrhage, and severe pulmonary hypertension and can be a life-saving procedure. But to save lives, physicians must be properly trained and exposed to a significant number of patients.

The *Dobbs* decision and subsequent abortion bans and restrictions are already harming graduate medical education and impacting the care that physicians can provide. If Congress pursues an appropriations bill that

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<sup>3</sup> Tampa Bay Times, “In a post-Roe country, a Florida doctor wonders where to call home,” September 2023, <https://www.tampabay.com/narratives/2023/09/06/post-roe-country-florida-doctor-wonders-where-call-home/>.

<sup>4</sup> Association of American Medical Colleges Research and Action Institute, “Training Location Preferences of U.S. Medical School Graduates Post *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization Decision*,” April 2023, <https://www.aamc.org/advocacy-policy/aamc-research-and-action-institute/training-location-preferences>.

<sup>5</sup> American Family Physician, “Family Medicine Residency Applications Declined More Precipitously in States with Abortion Restrictions,” August 2023, <https://www.aafp.org/pubs/afp/issues/2023/0800/graham-center-family-medicine-residency-applications.html>.

<sup>6</sup> Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education, “ACGME Program Requirements for Graduate Medical Education in Obstetrics and Gynecology, Summary and Impact of Interim Requirement Revisions,” June 2022, [https://www.acgme.org/globalassets/pfassets/reviewandcomment/220\\_obstetricsandgynecology\\_2022-06-24\\_impact.pdf](https://www.acgme.org/globalassets/pfassets/reviewandcomment/220_obstetricsandgynecology_2022-06-24_impact.pdf).

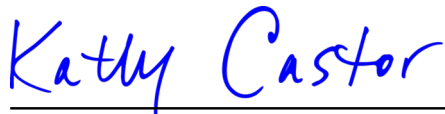
<sup>7</sup> Letter to Chair Aderholt, August 2023, <https://www.bgov.com/next/news/S08ZPZT0AFB4>.

<sup>8</sup> ACGME, June 2022.

<sup>9</sup> Kaiser Family Foundation.

further restricts federal funding for medical training, going against the evidence-based standard of care, we will see even fewer residents who are trained to handle the full range of reproductive health care. As you move forward with negotiations on the final Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2024, we urge you to reject Section 541 of H.R. 5894 and any other similar restrictions on graduate medical education to ensure that our communities can train and retain the caliber of physicians that patients and their families deserve.

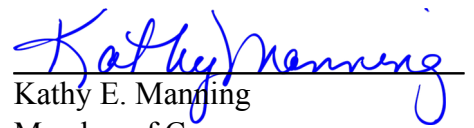
Sincerely,



Kathy Castor  
Member of Congress



Lois Frankel  
Member of Congress



Kathy E. Manning  
Member of Congress



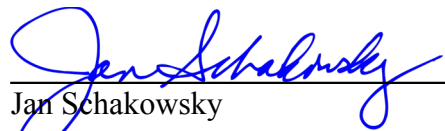
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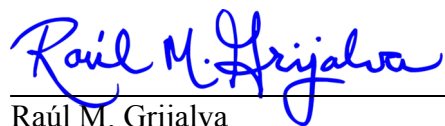
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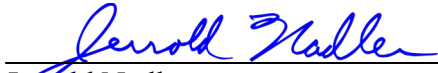
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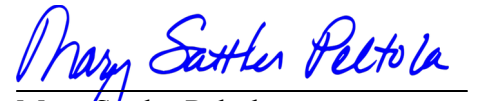
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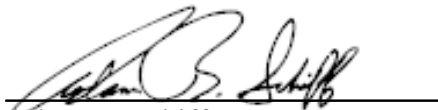
  
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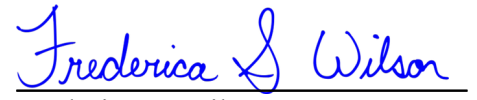
  
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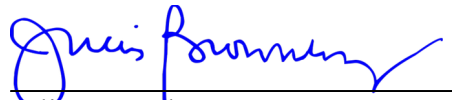
  
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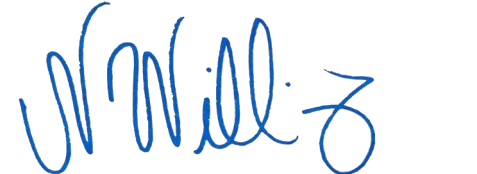
  
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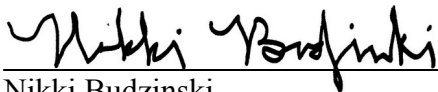
  
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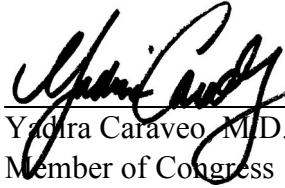
  
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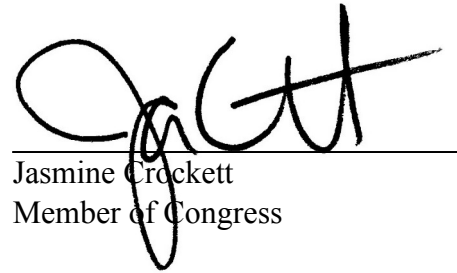
  
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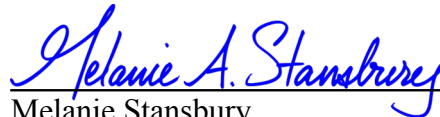
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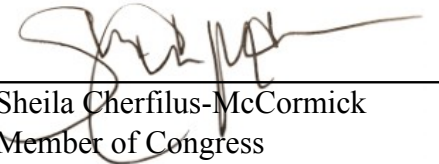
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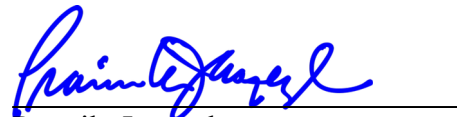
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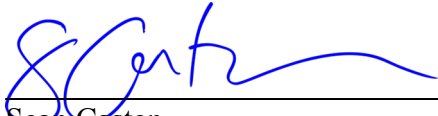
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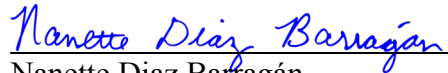
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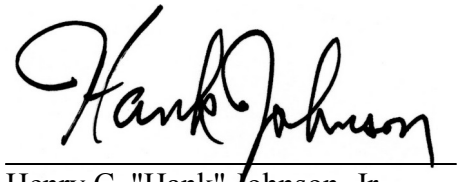
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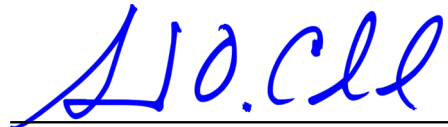
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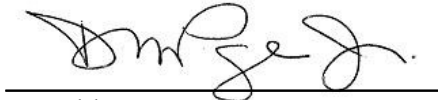
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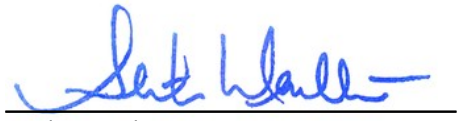
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