A Message to our Patients on the Loss of Reproductive Rights

Dear Patients,

We are physicians in the state of Ohio, gravely concerned for the well-being of our citizens, particularly of women and pregnant persons. With the Supreme Court's overturning of Roe v. Wade (U.S. v. Planned Parenthood [502 U.S. 199, 112 S. Ct. 568, 116 L. Ed. 2d 692], overruling the 1973 decision legalizing abortion), women will lose their right to choose. ("Heartbeat Bill") It has become painfully clear that women are now losing bodily autonomy, basic bodily rights, and the universal medical care and reproductive rights that policy-makers have negotiated for women and persons seeking abortion.

We stand steadfast in our support for the liberty and privacy of the patient-physician relationship. Withholding treatment until a personable medical emergency occurs is antithetical to our roles as healthcare workers. We unhesitantly believe that a woman's mental health is essential in the discussions regarding medical necessity and means-supported medical treatment.

We consider suicide to be a leading cause of death amongst women of child-bearing age. A government that takes the freedom of women to access medicolegal and teratologic physicians with criminal penalties for suppressing their right in an American context, this is immoral and unethical.

What defines and necessitates abortion is nuanced. Women may require abortion in order to undergo life-saving treatments such as chemotherapy. Women may choose to have an abortion to terminate an unwanted pregnancy, and to spare the emotional anguish that accompanies the death of a child that cannot survive outside the womb. A woman (including a child or an adolescent minor) may choose to have an abortion after being raped or sexually assaulted. A woman may choose to have an abortion if she cannot financially support her family. No explanation should be required for a choice that allows a woman to enjoy the same status in society as a man: freedom to pursue her health and wellbeing.

The decision to perform an abortion should be left solely to a woman and her physician. Doctors are guided by evidence-based medicine and are bound by our commitment to do no harm. The "Heartbeat Bill" is an attempt to govern personal autonomy and will directly lead to oppression, illness, and death of countless women. This will disproportionately affect women of color and individuals without the financial means to seek other options and will perpetuate the cycle of poverty. Anyone who supports this legislation is complicit in the greatest assault on women's rights in our lifetime.

As physicians of many specialties, we are calling on Ohio Governor Mike DeWine, as well as all elected and appointed government officials in the state of Ohio, to protect the lives of women and persons capable of becoming pregnant. We call on other physicians to defend our duty to our patients and our patients to organize for their personal bodily autonomy.

We demand that Ohio House Bill 258/Senate Bill 23 be repealed. We ask our elected officials to define the separation of church and state, to support reproductive autonomy, and to respect our basic rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

One Thousand Ohio Physicians