



July 5, 2022

The Honorable Xavier Becerra
Secretary
Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Ave SW
Washington, DC 20201

Re: Federal Action to Safeguard Public Health and the Patient-Physician Relationship

Dear Secretary Becerra:

On behalf of the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), representing more than 127,600 family physicians and medical students across the country, I write to express grave concern about the impact of the Supreme Court's ruling on *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health* on family physicians and their patients, as well as share the AAFP's support for comprehensive federal action to protect patients' health and physicians' ability to provide timely, evidence-based medical care.

The AAFP appreciates the administration's swift action in response to the Supreme Court's decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade* and *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* which removed the constitutional right to abortion. This decision enables states to further restrict patients' access to evidence-based health care, inappropriately [interfere](#) in the patient-physician relationship, and penalize and criminalize patients and clinicians for receiving or providing reproductive health care. The AAFP has consistently [opposed](#) legislative and regulatory interference in the provision of evidence-based care and is [committed](#) to advancing access to comprehensive health care for all. In the case of *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, we joined other leading medical societies in filing an [amicus brief](#) articulating our position that laws regulating abortion should be evidence-based, supported by a valid medical or scientific justification, and designed to improve—not harm—women's health.

As physicians who provide longitudinal primary care services to patients across the lifespan, family physicians are deeply [concerned](#) with the impact this decision will have on their patients' health. Family physicians see the [majority](#) of reproductive age women who seek office-based care. Many family physicians provide maternity care, work in hospitals, and staff emergency departments. As a result, family physicians see firsthand how restrictions on abortion care endanger patients' health and wellbeing. Criminalizing physicians and other clinicians for providing evidence-based, and in some cases, lifesaving reproductive health care will only worsen patient outcomes and widen health disparities. We agree that federal action is urgently needed to protect the health of the public.

As such, the AAFP urges HHS, in collaboration with the Departments of Justice, Labor, and Treasury, to use every available lever to protect patient safety, support family physicians and other clinicians, and strengthen timely access to reproductive health care, including abortion and contraception in accordance with federal law.

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We thank HHS for quickly taking steps to inform patients and physicians of their rights under federal law, strengthen contraception coverage, and protect access to medication abortion. The AAFP further appreciates HHS' commitment to support the clinical judgement of physicians, ensure medical professionals continue to receive comprehensive training, and enforce federal laws and regulations, such as the Emergency Treatment and Labor Act (EMTALA).

The AAFP stands ready to partner with HHS in operationalizing additional efforts to bolster access to comprehensive reproductive health care and safeguard the confidential patient-physician relationship. Please contact Stephanie Quinn, Senior Vice President, Advocacy, Practice Advancement, and Policy, at squinn@aafp.org with any questions or to set up a meeting.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ada D. Stewart, MD". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ada D. Stewart, MD, FAAFP
Board Chair, American Academy of Family Physicians