

# News From The States

## REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS TODAY

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By [Elisha Brown](#)



*One rural Wyoming woman started bleeding during her long drive to a postpartum check-up. Doctors discovered half of the patient's placenta lodged in the uterus.  
(Getty Images)*

Like many areas in the United States, Wyoming is facing a maternity care crisis.

More than 15% of Wyoming women had no birthing hospital within 30 minutes of their homes in 2022, compared to 9.7% of women facing the problem nationwide, according to the [March of Dimes](#).

Pregnant people who live in maternity care deserts are more likely to experience [medical complications](#), and their babies are more likely to require stints in neonatal intensive care units, research shows.

**The issue is deeply acute for residents in Fremont County, [WyoFile](#) reports. Located in West Central Wyoming, the area has one obstetric practice, one midwife and one labor and delivery unit.**

Fremont County is home to roughly 40,000 residents, but state data shows there were 339 births in 2022. In 2010, there were 608 births.

**Some residents choose to travel out of state if they can afford to. Others drive to larger metropolitan areas like Casper or Jackson for prenatal services and childbirth. But hazardous weather conditions and long journeys often lead to complications.**

Sara Domek, a Dubois, Wyoming resident, chose to give birth in Jackson, about 75 miles away. She became pregnant in mid-2019 and had around 20 prenatal appointments in Jackson. Domek's water broke one night in July 2020 while at home.

After she gave birth, she drove to Jackson for postpartum check-ups. During one drive, she started bleeding profusely. Providers discovered half of her placenta was still in her uterus, performed emergency surgery and gave Domek a blood transfusion.

"It was totally timely and so lucky that I was there," she told [WyoFile](#). "Had I been here in Dubois and not happened to be over there, I don't know what my story would look like."

Domek said she is afraid to have a second child, given the lack of access to care and the threat of [abortion](#) restrictions. Pregnancy termination is legal in Wyoming, but a near-total ban and a prohibition on medication abortions are being litigated in the courts.

**THE BEAT** *States Newsroom coverage*

## Arizona governor endorses abortion rights petition



*Arizona Gov. Katie Hobbs signed an abortion rights petition this week geared at expanding access through fetal viability and beyond in certain circumstances.  
(Gloria Rebecca Gomez/Arizona Mirror)*

Sitting directly in front of the only memorial dedicated to women at the Arizona Capitol, Democratic Gov. Katie Hobbs signed a petition form Tuesday for an abortion rights ballot measure. Launched in September, **the campaign is a bid to restore abortion access through fetal viability** — and later to protect someone’s physical or mental health and life — in the state, which currently bans abortions past 15 weeks except to save the patient’s life, [Arizona Mirror](#) reports. The effort will need some 384,000 signatures by July to make the November 2024 ballot.

“In Arizona we are just one bad court decision away from an 1864 abortion ban that carries prison time for doctors and provides no exception for rape or incest,” Hobbs said. **The state’s high court is set to hear arguments next month on whether to reinstate a 19th century near-total abortion ban.** The law was briefly in place last year after the U.S. Supreme Court struck down the federal right to an abortion. An Arizona appeals court ruled in December that the 15-week ban supersedes the older law. But the director of an anti-abortion clinic chain challenged the decision, reviving the case.

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## Maryland governor partners with birth control nonprofit

Officials in Maryland announced that they’re partnering with the nonprofit **Upstream USA** in an effort to widen birth control access and reduce unintended pregnancies. “We must do a better job of ensuring that when a Marylander walks into any doctor’s office, that they can get

connected to contraceptive care,” said Democratic Gov. Wes Moore. **The collaboration will last four years and provide training, education and technical support to the state’s reproductive health care workers,** [Maryland Matters](#) reports.

The funding for the program will come from the nonprofit instead of state money. Upstream USA has a similar collaboration with the Biden administration. **Some reproductive rights advocates have criticized the nonprofit for linking contraception to poverty reduction and focusing on long-acting reversible contraceptives,** such as IUDs, [Rewire News Group](#) reports. Mark Edwards, CEO and founder of Upstream, said the organization works to ensure patients have access to various birth control options. CCI Health Services, which has offices in Montgomery and Prince George’s County, will be the first provider to receive Upstream’s services.

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## Report: Medicaid reform could improve Idaho maternal, child health rates

Infant and child mortality rates are rising in Idaho, a report released Tuesday found. Experts say reforming Medicaid coverage could improve maternal and child health outcomes, [Idaho Capital Sun](#) reports. The maternal mortality rate in 2021 was 40.1 deaths per 100,000 births, up from 18.1 deaths per 100,000 births in 2019. Two years ago, 117 infants died in the state, compared to 97 infant deaths in 2019. **“Moms and children in Idaho are dying at an alarming rate,”** said Ivy Smith, health policy associate at Idaho Kids Covered.

**The group recommended that lawmakers update income cutoffs for children and pregnant people on Medicaid and expand postpartum Medicaid coverage from two months to a year.** Idaho is one of [three states](#) that has not expanded postpartum coverage, according to KFF. Legislators also disbanded a maternal mortality review committee this year, making Idaho the lone state without an oversight board for pregnancy-related deaths.

AJ McWhorter, a spokesperson for the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, told the Capital Sun that it requested funds in its budget for postpartum Medicaid expansion. He said reinstating the maternal mortality committee would also help tackle the death tolls.

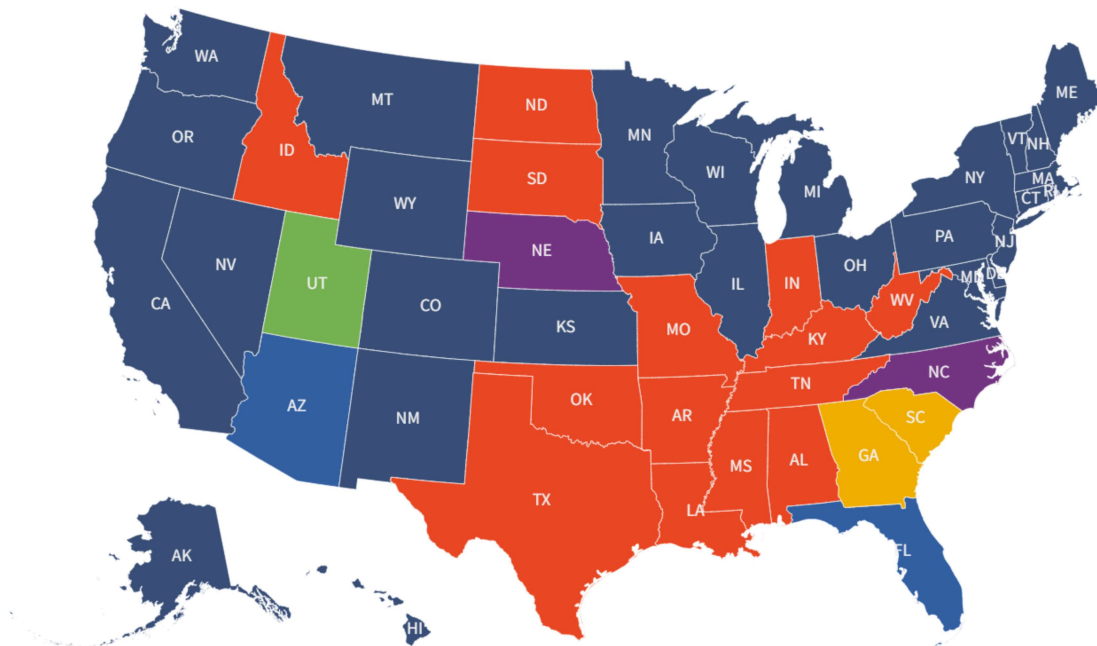
**THE PULL** *Commentary from Alabama*

“Patients come to us primarily for pregnancy confirmation letters that they need in order to apply for Medicaid, as their application won’t be accepted without doctor validation. As patients without insurance, the task of finding a doctor willing to see them and then provide that mandatory letter is nearly impossible.” — **Dr. Leah Torres and Robin Marty**, Alabama Women’s Center, [Alabama Reflector](#)

**THE PULSE** *Reproductive rights news across the country*

- Birthing centers in Alabama primarily serve white mothers and people who can afford to pay, state data shows. ([Alabama Political Reporter](#))
- The University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences was awarded \$17.5 million to study and reduce issues stemming from overweight pregnancies. ([Arkansas Advocate](#))
- Nearly 60% of Georgians said they have experienced or know someone who has had pregnancy complications, and more than a third of people polled said racism is an obstacle to maternal health equity. ([Atlanta Journal-Constitution](#))
- North Carolina researchers received \$21 million to address high-blood pressure diagnoses during pregnancy, a leading cause of maternal deaths. ([Raleigh News & Observer](#))
- Texas Supreme Court justices heard arguments in a case calling for clarity over how the state's abortion ban laws apply to medically complicated pregnancies. ([Texas Tribune](#))

**STATE BY STATE** *Abortion access in the U.S.*



Open this interactive map in your browser

Track state-level developments on reproductive rights anytime at [News From The States](#). Send tips and thoughts to [ebrown@statesnewsroom.com](mailto:ebrown@statesnewsroom.com), and follow her on Twitter [@elishacbrown](#).

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