

News From The States

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS TODAY

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By [Elisha Brown](#)



After a labor and delivery ward closed, Wyoming residents advocated for a community-owned hospital. (Getty Images)

Maternal health advocates in Wyoming, a state with dwindling childbirth options, have posed various solutions to improve pregnancy outcomes.

Josh Hannes, vice president of the Wyoming Hospital Association, told [WyoFile](#) he is concerned about retaining obstetricians and other core reproductive health workers. His group is encouraging lawmakers to fund the health care professional [loan repayment program](#), which hasn't received state money since 2018.

After a health care company consolidated services in two cities and closed a maternity ward, residents decided to launch a community-owned hospital. The state approved [\\$10 million](#) in

federal stimulus funds for the effort two months ago.

University of Wyoming researchers will use a \$5.2 million federal grant to study ways to resolve maternal mortality, clinical care, data collection and community engagement.

Last year, the Republican-controlled legislature [expanded Medicaid coverage for new mothers](#) from 60 days to 12 months.

Despite those advancements, experts said the state's two temporarily halted abortion laws — a medication abortion ban and a near-total ban are being challenged in court — have dissuaded doctors from working in Wyoming.

If the gaps in maternal health care persist, midwife Mandi Lew suspects pregnancy-related death rates will rise. "I don't see it getting any better any time soon until we can make some changes," she said. "Women deserve choices. Families deserve choices."

THE BEAT *States Newsroom coverage*

Wisconsin Planned Parenthood staff announce union drive



*Planned Parenthood workers in several states have organized, calling for better pay and policies.
(Isiah Holmes/Wisconsin Examiner)*

Employees at Wisconsin's Planned Parenthood are preparing to unionize, citing staffing shortages, low wages and lax paid-time off policies. **Management at the reproductive health organization said it will not oppose the drive.** More than 100 workers could join the

Wisconsin Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals if the union is certified. “We have quite a few clinics that are short-staffed and have been for quite some time, and we have a lot of turnover,” Andrea Sturgeon, a nurse practitioner, told [Wisconsin Examiner](#) this week. “We think that equitable wages could help to retain folks.”

Workers at Planned Parenthood locations across the nation have organized since Roe v. Wade fell in 2022, which caused a strain on the reproductive health field. Planned Parenthood employees in **Iowa, Minnesota, North Dakota** and **South Dakota** voted to join the Service Employees International Union, but contract negotiations are ongoing. Staff at a Southern **California** affiliate recently voted to unionize too, [CalMatters](#) reports, calling for improvements to pay, paid-time off policies and working conditions.

Kentucky Republican unveils \$551 million social welfare proposal

Sen. Whitney Westerfield, a Kentucky Republican and fervent anti-abortion lawmaker, filed a [bill](#) Tuesday that could invest roughly half a billion dollars to boost child care, education, housing and health services if approved. Westerfield said **the legislation would especially help pregnant people and families**, [Kentucky Lantern](#) reports. “We’re 50 years too late in doing this,” he said.

The measure would provide \$495 million in child care assistance to low-income families, grant free tuition at public colleges for students who meet certain criteria, expand health insurance enrollment options for pregnant people, require hospitals to keep new mothers between two and four days post-delivery and mandate Medicaid coverage of lactation services and breastfeeding resources, among other provisions.

When asked about Westerfield’s bill, Republican **Senate President Robert Stivers said he hasn’t seen the draft but wants to address mental health resources for victims of rape and incest** this legislative session. Kentucky is sitting on a budget surplus of \$3.7 billion.

South Carolina parental consent prescription bill draws scrutiny

A South Carolina Senate panel held a hearing Wednesday for a bill that would require doctors to notify parents of any medications prescribed to children under 18, [SC Daily Gazette](#) reports. The bill, sponsored by Republican Sen. Michael Johnson, targets a new Atrium Health policy that bans parents from accessing children’s health records without permission if they’re older than 11.

Pediatricians and pharmacists testified against the measure. Ramkumar Jayagopalan, a Columbia-based doctor, said teenagers with STDs, substance use history or mental health

issues may not want to discuss treatment with their parents. Adult notification might discourage them from getting help, he said. Adolescents would also have to bring a permission slip from a parent or guardian to pick up prescriptions under the bill.

A representative for South Carolina’s public health agency said the measure could also affect federal funding. The state Department of Health and Environmental Control receives about \$5 million yearly from the federal government for family planning clinics, which provide STD testing, pregnancy tests and birth control to people with low incomes. But the state advertises those services as confidential. A change in law could jeopardize federal funds, said Scott Jaillette, DHEC’s legislative affairs director.

Johnson said: “I think what we’re trying to do is make sure parents have access and are given notice and know what kind of prescriptions their children are on.” He floated the idea of changing the parental consent requirement to children and teens under 16.

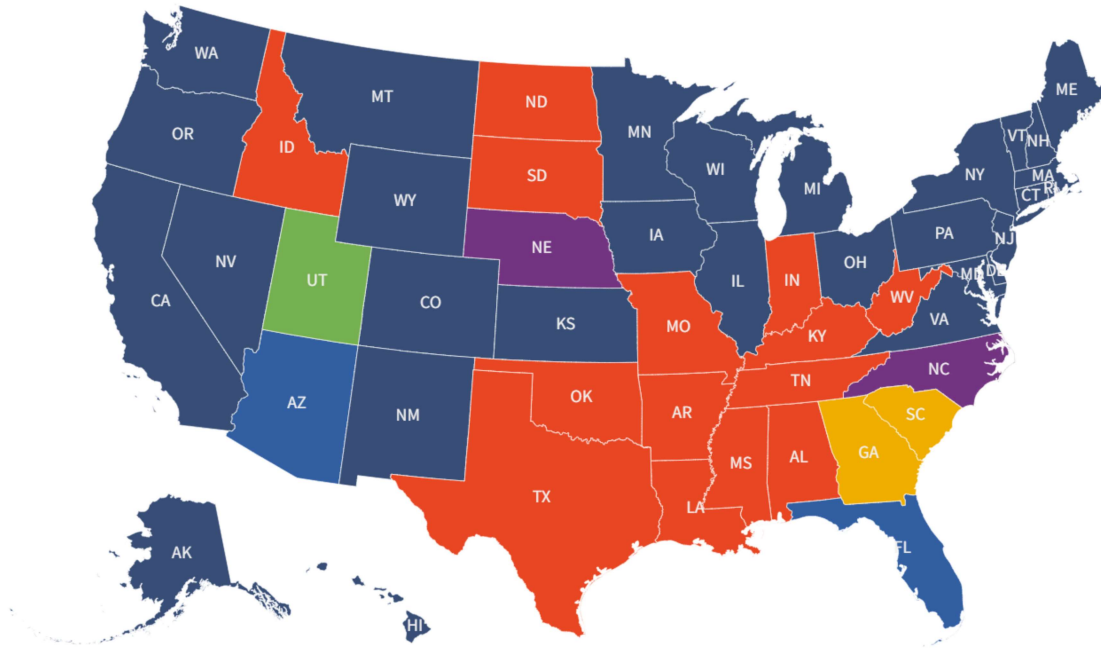
THE PULL *Commentary from Wisconsin*

“It’s very clear that voters in Wisconsin and across the nation don’t support politicians inserting themselves in our private health care decisions. The results of abortion ballot measures all over the country show that voters support abortion rights.” — **Ruth Conniff**, editor-in-chief, [Wisconsin Examiner](#)

THE PULSE *Reproductive rights news across the country*

- A Florida appeals court rejected a minor's request to have an abortion without notifying her parents. ([News Service of Florida](#))
- Birth rates in several states that ban abortion increased during the first half of 2023, a new report shows. ([Side Effects Public Media](#))
- Abortion-focused political reporting dominated local newspaper coverage in states with bans after the U.S. Supreme Court struck down Roe v. Wade. ([Politico](#))
- Microchimeric cells, which transfer between mothers and fetuses, may have the ability to ease the risk of high-risk pregnancies, improve surrogacy or help treat genetic diseases in utero. ([The Atlantic](#))

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



Open this interactive map in your browser

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