

# News From The States

## REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS TODAY

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By [Kelcie Moseley-Morris](#) and [Elisha Brown](#)



*DakotaRei Frausto, 19, traveled 11 hours from their hometown of San Antonio, Texas, in April 2022 for an abortion after their contraception failed.  
(Courtesy of DakotaRei Frausto)*

[DakotaRei Frausto](#) was 17 years old and 12 weeks pregnant when they had to travel 11 hours by car from San Antonio, Texas, to New Mexico to terminate a pregnancy after contraception failed them.

**The appointment was April 1, 2022, about six months after Senate Bill 8 initially took effect in Texas, banning abortions after about six weeks.** “I had a lot of health issues that played into me wanting to get an abortion, but those very issues made it difficult for me to realize I was pregnant in the first place,” said Frausto, who was eight weeks along by the time they discovered they were pregnant.

Among them: chronic nausea, anemia that causes dizziness and fatigue, and premenstrual dysphoric disorder — better known as PMDD — which causes severe mood swings and other symptoms often associated with premenstrual syndrome, including a missed period.

“Those are big signs of pregnancy early on, and I did not see those at all,” they said.

**Frausto’s story is the first in an occasional States Newsroom series called “When and Where? Abortion access in America.”** Reporter Kelcie Moseley-Morris interviewed people who have navigated the patchwork of laws around reproductive health care in the U.S. before and after the U.S. Supreme Court’s *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization* decision.

[Read more of the teen’s profile.](#)

**THE BEAT** *States Newsroom coverage*

## Ohio abortion funds struggle while anti-abortion centers get millions in state funding



*Ohioans United for Reproductive Rights members attend an election night party on Nov. 7, 2023.  
(Graham Stokes/Ohio Capital Journal)*

While reproductive rights groups recently celebrated a constitutional amendment that secured access to abortion and related health care, Ohio’s abortion funds are struggling to stay afloat. **The Abortion Fund of Ohio has paused services until Feb. 1** due to the “dramatic drop-off in funds and increase in patient need,” [Ohio Capital Journal](#) reports.

There was a 39% increase in requests for money to get an abortion, and a 178% jump for financial assistance due to costs like travel or child care after the Dobbs ruling, according to the [National Network of Abortion Funds](#). **Funding to these mutual aid groups was at an all-time-high following the U.S. Supreme Court's reversal of Roe in June 2022.**

**But donations to abortion funds declined in 2023**, despite the steady demand for help. “The millions of dollars directed towards Ohio’s abortion ballot initiative, though crucial, has inadvertently shifted funds away from direct abortion services,” Aileen Day, an Abortion Fund of Ohio board member, told the Capital Journal. “Post-ballot, we’re not seeing these funds return, which is alarming given AFO’s record-high funding requests statewide,” Day said.

**Members of Faith Choice Ohio** have an arm called the **Jubilee Fund**, which accepts financial requests to help with abortions. Executive Director Elaina Ramsey said her group is doing fine for now, but it also saw year-end contributions decline in 2023 by 30%. “I suspect that people have moved on and don’t realize the critical need for sustainable abortion funding, even after a major victory like Issue 1,” Ramsey said.

**Meanwhile, federal grants intended for low-income Americans are partially funding Ohio’s anti-abortion crisis pregnancy centers.** Since 2013, the state Parenting and Pregnancy Program has [diverted](#) Temporary Assistance for Needy Families funds to groups that solely promote alternatives to abortion. Ohio gave [\\$7 million](#) to the program in the latest budget. Republican [Gov. Mike DeWine](#) also signed an executive order in 2022 that gave the initiative \$13 million in TANF funding.

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## Wisconsin Senate up next for 14-week abortion ban proposal

Wisconsin Republicans in the House **passed a bill last week that would ask voters to enact a 14-week abortion ban** with exemptions for rape, incest or to save a patient’s life. The Assembly passed the legislation in less than two weeks, [Wisconsin Examiner](#) reports. Democrats, health care workers and anti-abortion groups, which favor a near-total ban, testified against the proposal. Democratic Gov. Tony Evers vowed to veto the measure if it lands on his desk.

Republicans defended the bill during Thursday’s floor debate, citing their religion and health care experience. “I think I know mammalian fetal development better than probably anyone here, and in my mind, there’s absolutely no question, that’s a life, and I think, the science backs me up on that,” said **Rep. Joel Kitchens, a former veterinarian.**

Democrats argued that the proposal jeopardizes bodily autonomy. “Every pregnancy is different, and these are individual personal decisions that should be made between a patient and [a] physician and others who we may choose to involve,” said **Rep. Lisa Subeck, a former child care worker.**

Abortion is legal up to 20 weeks of pregnancy in the state. But an **1849 statute** banning most abortions was considered valid after the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* in June 2022. Providers stopped terminating pregnancies until a county judge ruled last year that the 19th century law applied to feticide, not abortion. Attorney General Josh Kaul, a Democrat, has asked the Wisconsin Supreme Court to interpret the older law's legitimacy.

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## NC provider to offer care aimed at reducing maternal health disparities

A Raleigh-based health center that helps low-income and uninsured North Carolinians is opening an **OB-GYN clinic geared at improving pregnancy outcomes** for Black people, [NC Newsline](#) reports. Advance Community Health will hire an expansive team to address the issue, including a nurse, nurse practitioners, a dietician and social workers. The center will also launch a **program for expectant fathers**.

North Carolina's infant mortality rate [improved](#) from 2021 to 2022, federal data shows. But Black babies in the state are still more than twice as likely to die before their first birthdays than white babies, [Newsline](#) reports. Pregnancy-related deaths more than [doubled](#) between 2019 and 2021. Black people make up 22% of North Carolina's population but accounted for 43% of maternal deaths between 2020 and 2022, according to [MuckRock](#).

### **THE PULL** *Commentary from West Virginia*

"Access to maternity care in West Virginia, especially among Black, Indigenous and people of color is not consistently available as just over 49% of counties are defined as maternity care deserts compared to 32.6 percent in the U.S." — **Ellen Allen**, West Virginians for Affordable Health Care executive director, [West Virginia Watch](#)

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

- A West Virginia bill would require eighth and 10th grade students to watch a video about fetal development that was produced by the anti-abortion group LiveAction. ([West Virginia Watch](#))
- Iowa health officials will soon distribute \$1 million to crisis pregnancy centers. ([Iowa Capital Dispatch](#))
- Connecticut passed a law in 2021 that offered postpartum Medicaid coverage to people regardless of their immigration status, but maternal health advocates said hospital staff are still telling patients they don't qualify for insurance. ([CT Mirror](#))
- Recent data shows teen birth rates in Texas increased for the first since 2014, a rise researchers say was influenced by the state's abortion restrictions. ([Texas Tribune](#))
- Washington pharmacists are set to begin prescribing abortion medication. ([NPR](#))



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