

News From The States

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS TODAY

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By Sofia Resnick



Supporters of the ballot proposal to enshrine the right to abortion in the Florida Constitution hold signs outside of the Florida Supreme Court on Feb. 7, 2024.
(Jackie Llanos/Florida Phoenix)

Republican legislators in Florida have introduced “personhood” language into a wrongful death bill, which abortion-rights activists say **could interfere with ongoing efforts to enshrine abortion access in the state constitution**, reports the [Florida Phoenix](#).

The two Florida GOP lawmakers behind the wrongful death proposals, **Sen. Erin Grall** and **Rep. Jenna Persons-Mulicka**, also sponsored the state's current 15-week and blocked six-week abortion bans, which are currently awaiting an opinion from the Florida Supreme Court. Though, Grall says the wrongful death bill is not about abortion. The bill advanced last week with an amendment that **would establish personhood at conception**.

"This is a very dangerous amendment, which seeks to establish fetal personhood and potentially ban all abortions in Florida, endangers the rights and autonomy of pregnant individuals," said **Barbara DeVane**, a lobbyist with the Florida National Organization for Women. "It also subverts the efforts of all of us who are working so hard to put a constitutional amendment on the ballot in November."

Advocates are also waiting on the state Supreme Court to decide whether to allow the proposed abortion-rights amendment on the ballot.

Wrongful death suits for fetuses in all stages of development are allowed in 15 states. The Florida bill prohibits suits against pregnant persons but not against abortion providers or those providing assistance to access abortion. Opponents of the bill have pointed to a Texas lawsuit where a man sued his ex-wife's friends for helping her obtain abortion-inducing medication, arguing Florida could see the same types of suits if the bill passes. Grall said: "Any abortion provider that provides a lawful abortion could not be sued."

THE BEAT *States Newsroom coverage*

State legislators aim to make patients rank abortion reasons, show anti-abortion videos in schools

Legislative Tracker

States Newsroom's **Kelcie Moseley-Morris** is back with a second installment of our [biweekly legislative roundup](#) of abortion-related bills, focusing especially on states that have already banned pregnancy termination. Depending on the partisan makeup of a state's legislature and other state government officials, some bills have a higher chance of becoming law than others.

Some examples:

Iowa

House File 2031: Health classes in Iowa schools would be required to show videos of fetal development, like one produced by the [anti-abortion activist group Live Action](#).

Status: Passed by Education Committee, eligible for consideration by full House

Sponsor: Republican Rep. Luana Stoltenberg

Kansas

House Bill 2749: This bill [would require](#) abortion providers to ask patients to rank their “top reasons” for wanting to terminate a pregnancy, along with demographic information.

Status: Passed by Health and Human Services Committee

Sponsor: Requested on behalf of Kansans for Life by Republican Rep. Ron Bryce

Oklahoma

House Bill 3216 : This bill [would create](#) a civil mechanism for those who help someone obtain an abortion and require physicians to report each abortion with a “unique patient identifier” registered with the state’s health department. Republicans and Democrats on the committee are concerned the bill could ban some forms of birth control, such as IUDs.

Status: Approved by committee on Feb. 15, awaiting consideration by the full House

Sponsor: Republican Rep. Kevin West, crafted with Christian right [Alliance Defending Freedom](#)

Read about more bills at the [News from the States](#).

Maryland bill would extend reproductive health care protections to gender-affirming care



*Sen. Clarence Lam (D-Anne Arundel and Howard) is part of a panel with transgender health advocates on Feb. 15, 2024.
(Danielle J. Brown/Maryland Matters)*

A new Maryland bill would expand protections to the recently enacted Reproductive Health Protection Act to include health providers of gender-affirming care, reports [Maryland Matters](#). The current law shields providers from liability if they help out-of-state patients obtain an abortion. **Senate Bill 119**, according to sponsor **Sen. Clarence K. Lam** (D-Howard and Anne Arundel), would similarly protect providers of gender-affirming care from having their medical records subpoenaed or being extradited to other states.

“The LGBTQ+ community is under siege in our nation, and none more so than those in transgender community,” said Lam, a physician, during a state Senate Finance committee hearing last week. “Just like the bans on abortion and other reproductive health services, many of these bans are structured in ways that could be used to harass gender-affirming patients here in Maryland, or to go after the license of our providers.”

The **Movement Advancement Project**, a nonprofit progressive think tank, reports that **nearly [two dozen states](#) (including Maryland’s neighbor West Virginia) ban physicians from providing gender-affirming care to minors**. Gender-affirming care refers to a variety of treatments and procedures, including hormone therapy, voice training, and surgery. Meanwhile, **[11 states and D.C.](#) have enacted “shield” laws protecting access to gender-affirming care**. Maryland currently has executive orders to protect providers, but SB 119 would ensure protection in statute.

“Women’s rights and trans justice are parallel struggles in the fight for bodily autonomy, and that protection needs clarity,” **Jamie Grace Alexander**, of the **Trans Rights Advocacy Coalition**, told the committee last week.

Mississippi legislature could further expand Medicaid following postpartum expansion

For the first time in a decade, a Republican leader in Mississippi is proposing to **expand Medicaid** to cover approximately 230,000 adults who currently earn too much to qualify for Medicaid but too little to afford private insurance, reports [Mississippi Today](#). This follows a previous session where the Mississippi Legislature passed a measure to provide **12 months of postpartum coverage for mothers**.

“We’re looking at the part of people who aren’t already covered that would fit into this workforce – maybe a working mom with a child or two children, how do we get her continued health care after the postpartum period,” **Mississippi Lt. Gov. Delbert Hosemann** said last week ahead of the Senate filing the expansion bill. “So if I can get the federal government to pay for some or all of this, I’m going to do that.”

Hosemann said the bill will likely increase Medicaid eligibility to people making up to 138% of the poverty level, i.e., an annual household income of up to \$43,000 for a family of four. **Gov. Tate Reeves** opposes Medicaid expansion and could veto a bill if it passes the Legislature, at which point two-thirds of lawmakers would have to vote to override the veto.

THE PULL *Commentary from Iowa*

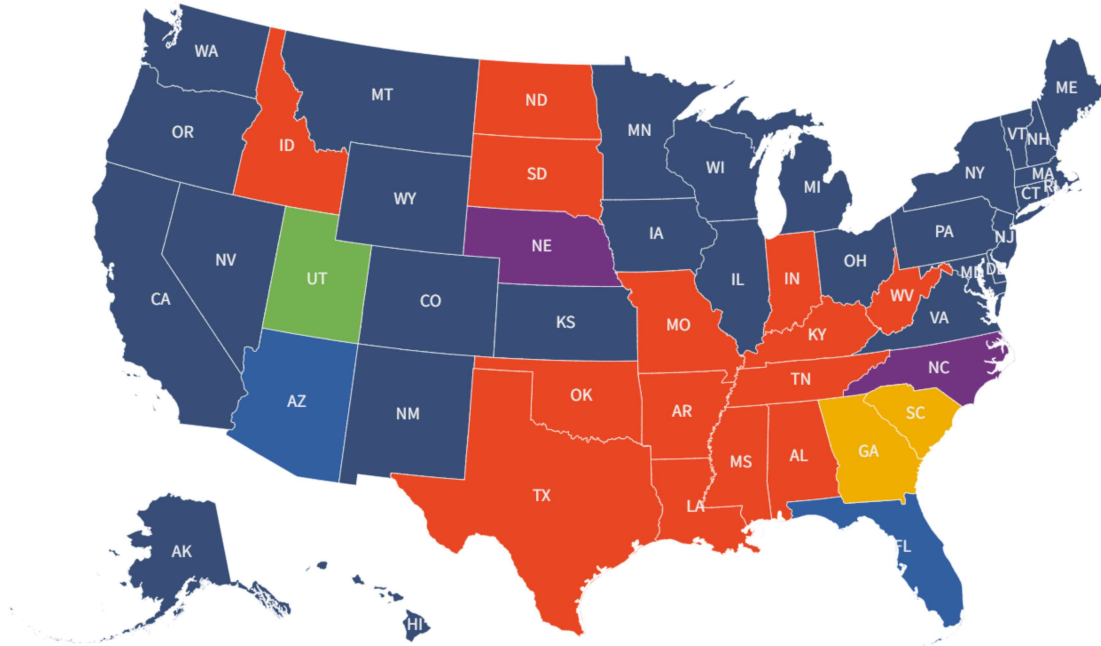
“There should be few qualms among abortion opponents to state government helping sexual assault victims from becoming pregnant. To take the opposite position comes across as cold and uncaring for the teens and women who are victimized by rapists.” — **Randy Evans**, executive director at Iowa Freedom of Information Council, [Iowa Capital Dispatch](#)

THE PULSE *Reproductive rights news across the country*

- Maryland Democratic U.S. Senate candidates bash GOP opponent Larry Hogan for being against enshrining abortion rights in his home state after the former governor came out against a national abortion ban. ([Maryland Matters](#))
- Missouri bill would prohibit employers from considering the unborn as employees in civil actions. ([Missouri Independent](#))
- Nebraska Sen. Julie Slama, who fought for abortion restrictions while facing pregnancy complications, decides not to run for re-election this cycle. ([Nebraska Examiner](#))
- The state of Tennessee, which questioned a woman’s fitness to parent her four children, forced her to continue a pregnancy that risked her life. ([ProPublica](#))

- A new study published in Nature Medicine concludes that telehealth medication abortion is safe. ([NPR](#))
- Former president Donald Trump supports a 16-week national abortion ban. ([The New York Times](#))

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, and follow her on X [@elishacbrown](#).

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