

News From The States

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS TODAY

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



*Christian King, a doula with Uzazi Village in Kansas City, Missouri, wraps Mikia Marshall, 33, with a kanga cloth to help take pressure off her stomach on Feb. 27, 2024.
(Anna Sporre/Missouri Independent).*

Doulas — holistic birth workers who help mothers navigate pregnancy — in Missouri are not guaranteed Medicaid reimbursements. As a result, some doulas offer a sliding-scale fee to families who cannot afford the full cost of their services.

“Why continue to feed into doulas being a luxury and for those who can afford to pay out of pocket for them?” said **Christian King**, a doula in Kansas City, Missouri. “When in our Black communities and low-income communities, doulas are not a luxury, they are a necessity.”

King, a mother of three who works two jobs, told [Missouri Independent](#) that she lowers or eliminates prices for clients with low incomes. She is a doula at **Uzazi Village**, a nonprofit in

one of Kansas City's most impoverished ZIP codes that's dedicated to improving Black maternal health.

A bipartisan group of lawmakers is working to make doula care and birth centers more accessible.

Republican Rep. Wendy Hausman and Democratic Rep. Jamie Johnson filed identical [measures](#) that would allow state-registered doulas to receive insurance reimbursements. Both bills passed through committee last week.

"There are many women who do not have faith in the medical community, and they prefer to explore other avenues and other options for health care," Hausman said during a hearing last month. "I believe that women deserve to be taken care of in a way that they're most comfortable during this very complex time."

A [proposal](#) from GOP Rep. Kent Haden would **allow birth centers to get licensed and receive Medicaid reimbursements**. Haden said he hopes the legislation could improve pregnancy care in rural Missouri, where hospitals continue to close. More than 41% of counties in the state are [maternity care deserts](#), according to the March of Dimes.

"Missourians do need the option of birth centers, especially since hospitals are closing and those high-acuity services are further and farther between," said Hakima Payne, co-founder and CEO of Uzazi Village. "Birth centers can absolutely stand in the gap."

In an effort to tackle maternal health disparities, Missouri expanded postpartum Medicaid from 60 days to 12 months in 2023. **Republican Gov. Mike Parson announced a plan last year to invest \$4.3 million in improving birth outcomes**, which he called "embarrassing and absolutely unacceptable." Most of the pregnancy-related deaths reported annually in the state are preventable, according to the Independent.

"Doulas really do make a difference in birth outcomes," Payne said. "And lots of entities are benefiting off the efforts of doulas, and those are the entities that should be paying doulas."

THE BEAT *States Newsroom coverage*

Democrats push contraceptive access bills after Alabama ruling

The logo for "Legislative Tracker" features the words "Legislative Tracker" in a large, bold, blue, sans-serif font. The text is arched over a stylized graphic consisting of three horizontal lines: a top blue line, a middle red line, and a bottom blue line. The entire graphic is set against a white background.

States Newsroom's latest legislative tracker by **Kelcie Moseley-Morris** looks at efforts from Democrats to pass bills that protect access to birth control and other abortion-related bills in statehouses across the country:

Alabama

Following outcry over loss of access to in vitro fertilization services after the Alabama Supreme Court declared frozen embryos to have the same legal standing as human beings, state legislators quickly passed a bill extending civil and criminal immunity to IVF clinics. Republican Gov. Kay Ivey signed it the same night, though questions still remain about whether the measure is sufficient protection for providers, [Alabama Reflector](#) reported.

Now House Democrats are trying to protect access to birth control in the state where nearly all abortions are banned at any stage of pregnancy.

[House Bill 279](#): The bill establishes the right for individuals to use contraception and for health care providers to distribute it and offer guidance as to how it should be used, according to the [Reflector](#). Democrats expressed concern that birth control is next on the list for being banned or restricted, and said the law would provide protection, particularly for people with low incomes or those who don't have health insurance and face limited options for affordable birth control. The chairman of the House Judiciary Committee has not indicated whether the bill will receive a hearing.

Status: Referred to House Judiciary Committee, awaiting hearing

Sponsor: Democratic Rep. Anthony Daniels

Idaho

Idaho has a near-total abortion ban at any stage of pregnancy, with exceptions to save the pregnant patient's life, and in cases of rape and incest during the first trimester.

[Senate Bill 1234](#): By one vote, the House of Representatives passed a bill requiring insurance companies to cover up to six months of contraceptives instead of the standard one- to three-month supplies, reports [Idaho Capital Sun](#). The bill was sponsored by one of few Democrats in the state legislature, and Planned Parenthood Great Northwest advocated for its passage.

Status: Passed both chambers, awaiting signature from Republican Gov. Brad Little

Sponsor: Democratic Sen. Melissa Wintrow

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

Concerns over IVF ruling hit North Carolina



*Lauren Garrett, a North Carolina woman who became a parent through in vitro fertilization, spoke at a news conference about how grateful she was for the treatment.
(Lynn Bonner/NC Newsline)*

Women who became pregnant through in vitro fertilization and fertility doctors are asking North Carolina lawmakers to protect the treatment, [NC Newsline](#) reported. “IVF has not only granted us the gift of parenthood, but also elevates each moment with our children with profound gratitude,” said Lauren Garrett during a recent news conference.

An Alabama Supreme Court [ruling](#) last month that frozen embryos are “children” under the law reverberated across the country. Several states moved in recent weeks to protect in vitro fertilization after Alabama lawmakers [passed](#) legislation giving IVF providers and patients criminal and civil immunity.

But in North Carolina, Republican House Speaker **Tim Moore** dismissed the calls for IVF laws. “I’m not aware of it being an issue here at all,” Moore told reporters last week. Attorney General **Josh Stein**, a Democrat running for governor, urged the GOP-controlled legislature to shield fertility treatments. “The General Assembly can alleviate all of that anxiety when they come back into session this April by passing a law that makes it crystal clear that IVF is protected here in North Carolina, and I urge them to do so.”

Michigan Senate committee passes surrogacy reform package

Lawmakers in Michigan are advancing the The Fertility Health Care Act, a nine-bill package that would legalize contracted surrogacy and expand protections for surrogates, parents and

children. A Senate committee approved the bills on Thursday, [Michigan Advance](#) reported.

Democratic Gov. **Gretchen Whitmer** backs the reforms. “Decisions about if, when, and how to have a child are deeply personal,” she said in a statement. “Politicians should not be dictating the terms of these private decisions that should be left to a family, their doctor, and those they love and trust.”

Michigan is the only state in the nation that criminalizes surrogacy contracts. Under the package’s main bill, a surrogate would have to be 21 or older, have given birth to a child before, completed medical evaluations and have a lawyer paid for by the prospective parents. Other provisions would **give children born through surrogacy rights to inheritance** and their birth certificates, **protect families who use IVF** and **make sure LGBTQ+ parents are not discriminated against** during the surrogacy process.

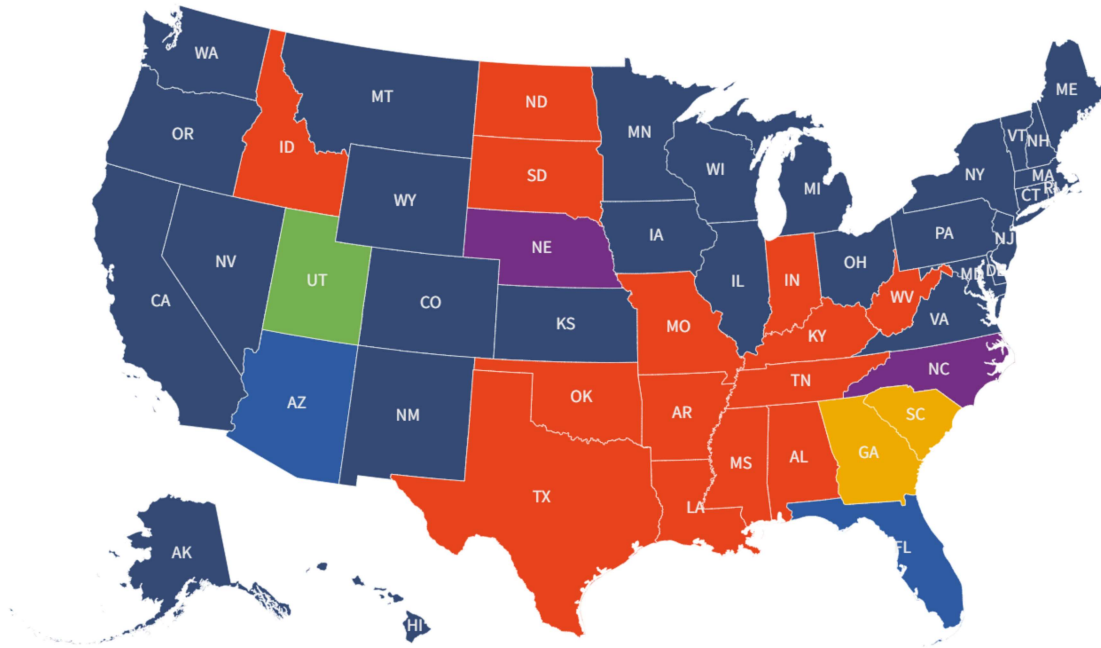
THE PULL *Commentary from Missouri*

“Andrew Bailey has decided it is politically useful for him to aid and abet Project Veritas’ attempt to put crosshairs on abortion providers, despite the history of those metaphorical crosshairs becoming deadly literal.” — **Bridgette Dunlap**, lawyer, [Missouri Independent](#)

THE PULSE *Reproductive rights news across the country*

- Republican candidates vying to be Pennsylvania’s next attorney general said they will follow the state’s abortion laws if elected. ([Pennsylvania Capital-Star](#))
- Maternal health advocates push Wyoming lawmakers to address the pregnancy care crisis with 11 of 23 counties lacking a practicing OB-GYN. ([WyoFile](#))
- Residents in polluted parts of Louisiana have a 25% higher risk of delivering babies with low birth weight and a 36% higher risk of preterm birth compared with people who live in unpolluted areas of the state, according to a recent study. ([The 19th*](#))
- A new documentary details the connection between crisis pregnancy centers and well-funded anti-abortion organizations. ([Jezebel](#))

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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