

Leading Medical Organizations Urge the Supreme Court Not to Weaken EMTALA Protections

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, joined by the following leading medical organizations, released the following statement:

American Academy of Emergency Medicine | American Academy of Family Physicians | American Academy of Nursing | American Academy of Pediatrics | American College of Chest Physicians | American College of Emergency Medicine | American College of Nurse-Midwives | American Medical Women's Association | American Society for Reproductive Medicine | American Urogynecologic Society | Association of Professors of Gynecology and Obstetrics | Council of Chairs of Obstetrics and Gynecology | Doctors for America | National Abortion Federation | National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health | National Society of Genetic Counselors | North American Society for Pediatric and Adolescent Gynecology | Nurses for Sexual and Reproductive Health | Reproductive Health Access Project | Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine | Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine | Society of Family Planning | Society of General Internal Medicine | Society of Gynecologic Oncology

“The Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act (EMTALA) plays a critical role in ensuring that patients across the country have access to emergency medical care and lifesaving interventions. For pregnant people, abortion may be the lifesaving intervention needed. It is therefore essential that abortion care be covered by the federal protections afforded by EMTALA. We urge the Supreme Court to preserve EMTALA’s protections for emergency abortion care even in states where abortion is otherwise banned or restricted.

“Complications associated with pregnancy—whether they arise during pregnancy or are preexisting conditions that worsen during pregnancy—can appear suddenly and progress quickly, leading many individuals to seek care in the emergency setting. Pregnancy complications can take many forms and can compound each other, further complicating a patient’s needs. And even though these complications may not arise from the pregnancy itself—for example, if they are caused by accidents or violence—the physiological stressors of pregnancy can make them more life-threatening.

“In many of these emergency situations, the only way to treat or stabilize a patient is to end the pregnancy that is complicating or threatening their health. Because of this, EMTALA’s protections must cover abortion care so that access to lifesaving emergency care does not depend on a person’s zip code.

“As organizations representing health care professionals, we understand that not every patient who presents to the emergency room while pregnant will need abortion care. But EMTALA should guarantee that patients experiencing pregnancy complications in the emergency setting are able to get evidence-based care, which includes being counseled fairly and honestly and receiving an abortion if that is the intervention that they need for their health emergency.

“Without comprehensive EMTALA protections, the lives of pregnant patients will most certainly be at risk. EMTALA must continue to protect pregnant people just as it protects those who aren’t pregnant.”