

Our State Just Passed a Near-Total Abortion Ban

Lucy Brown^{1*}, Alexandra McKinzie¹

¹Indiana University School of Medicine, 340 W 10th St, Indianapolis, IN 46202, USA

*Correspondence should be addressed to Lucy Brown, lucybrow@iu.edu

Received date: August 29, 2022, **Accepted date:** September 08, 2022

Citation: Brown L, McKinzie A. Our State Just Passed a Near-Total Abortion Ban. Arch Obstet Gynecol. 2022;3(2):64-65.

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Keywords: Abortion, Policy

On Friday, August 5th, the Indiana legislature passed Senate Bill 1 (SB1), a near-total abortion ban, which was signed into law by Governor Holcomb [1]. Exceptions for rape and incest only exist up to 10 weeks. Both medical and surgical abortions must be performed in a hospital. And, if a physician performs the procedure on someone who does not meet these exceptions, it is categorized as a level 5 felony for an “unlawful abortion”.

This ban didn't come out of nowhere. This ban was the culmination of years–decades–of the Indiana GOP's targeted removal of protections for reproductive healthcare. In the past year alone, Indiana passed several anti-choice bills, including one promoting a dangerous and unsubstantiated abortion “reversal” drug [2]. Prior to the ban, Indiana was already one of the most restrictive states in terms of number of anti-abortion laws, second only to Louisiana [3]. Clinics around the state have been driven to close from Targeted Regulation of Abortion Providers (TRAP) laws, leaving just four clinics that can provide comprehensive reproductive care and 96 percent of counties without an abortion clinic [3]. And now many of those will be forced to close as well. Living here, it feels like Indiana has been left behind by the reproductive health movement.

We are medical students applying to OB/GYN this year. Throughout our education, we've seen bill after bill chip away at our reproductive rights, knowing that this near-total ban was the inevitable conclusion and feeling helpless to prevent it. We see pharmacies gatekeeping safe, effective abortifacient medications and emergency room physicians hesitating to perform evidence-based procedures to manage miscarriage and other non-abortion-related conditions [4,5]. For us, it has been especially demoralizing to witness our rights, and the rights of our patients, stripped away as we get closer and closer to getting our medical degrees. Three years ago, we were so excited to become doctors; now, we are feeling

dispirited to enter a profession that is not only under attack but isn't valued.

If anything positive can come from this, it is the pure, unbridled advocacy we've witnessed from our mentor physicians. We've watched as the practitioners from which we've been lucky enough to learn are publicly attacked and threatened for providing compassionate, evidence-based care [6,7]. Nevertheless, these physicians show up every day, not only providing the necessary care that endangers themselves and their careers, but also tirelessly testifying, rallying, and organizing on behalf of their patients. Even in Indiana, where it feels like the fight has already been lost, they continue to march on– a lesson in advocacy that is not lost on us medical students. We will continue their fight for reproductive justice, having learned from them the true meaning of advocacy.

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