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Chief Operations Officer

Chevis N. Shannon, DrPH, MPH, MBA
Chief Education & Science Officer

Tennessee State Senate
600 Charlotte Ave, Nashville, TN 37243

4/9/24

Dear Chair McNally and members of the Senate,

On behalf of the American Society for Reproductive Medicine (ASRM), I am writing to express strong opposition to [SB 1971](#) which would curtail the reproductive rights of the residents of Tennessee and put young Tennesseans and their physicians at risk.

ASRM is a multidisciplinary organization of nearly 8,000 professionals dedicated to the advancement of the art, science, and practice of reproductive medicine. Distinguished members of ASRM include obstetricians and gynecologists, urologists, reproductive endocrinologists, embryologists, mental health professionals and others.

SB 1971 would create the term “abortion trafficking” to make aiding a person under the age of 18 in accessing abortion care a crime. What SB 1971 fails to note is that abortion clinics and providers are decades ahead of this legislation. Abortion clinics and the domestic violence community have long worked together to ensure the rights and physical autonomy of women. Advocates for women organized free-standing clinics beginning in the 1970s in part to enable women to counsel other women and give patients a safe, judgment-free space to discuss their decision. By attempting to vilify abortion clinics and providers in the name of human trafficking, SB 1971 misses a crucial opportunity to actually help trafficking victims by including the health care providers where they are most likely to seek treatment. According to the Joint Committee on Human Trafficking, sex trafficking victims, often children and teenagers, are trafficked to buyers approximately 20 times a day and most human trafficking reports conclude that healthcare providers are a “missed opportunity” for early intervention. Criminalizing this care could mean that true victims of trafficking are denied the opportunity to request and receive help.

Furthermore, SB 1971 could even affect IVF and fertility preservation care in Tennessee. As we saw to chilling effects in Alabama, when legislation targets “minor” or “unborn child,” it can be applied to the fertilized eggs or embryos of perspective parents. For those people in Tennessee who have preserved their gametes in the hopes of building their families, SB 1971 could potentially make it illegal to transport those embryos for treatment and implantation.

In allowing the government to intervene in the sacred relationship between a patient and physician, passing SB 1971 would only make access to critical reproductive care more difficult and, indeed, dangerous for some of Tennessee’s most vulnerable citizens.



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For these and other reasons, I strongly urge you to oppose the passage of SB 1971.

For more information, feel free to contact me or Sean Tipton, Chief Advocacy and Policy officer at Stipton@asrm.org or 202-421-5112

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paula Amato', written in a cursive style.

Paula Amato, MD
President
American Society for Reproductive Medicine