

18 Georgia OBGYNs Report They Have Personally Observed Cases Where Georgia Abortion Ban Contributed to Health Complications or Deaths of Pregnant Women

Executive Summary

In a survey of Georgia OBGYNs conducted by the office of U.S. Senator Jon Ossoff, with the assistance of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), the vast majority of respondents (30 out of 38) agreed that Georgia's abortion ban put women's health at greater risk, and 18 OBGYNs reported that they had personally encountered cases in which Georgia's six-week abortion ban contributed to a health complication or death of the mother. Georgia OBGYNs described cases in which emergency rooms turned away patients having miscarriages, doctors were forced to wait for patients' condition to deteriorate before terminating pregnancies, and women were afraid to seek treatment for complications from abortions induced through medication or obtained out of state.

Background

Senator Ossoff's office, with the assistance of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), conducted a survey of ACOG's Georgia membership seeking information about the impact of Georgia's six-week abortion ban on the OBGYN workforce and the ability of Georgia OBGYNs to offer full-spectrum medical care to their patients.

Survey Findings

Even before Georgia's six-week abortion ban, women in Georgia faced some of the highest rates of maternal morbidity and mortality in the country.¹ Now, 30 out of the 38 OBGYN survey respondents warned that Georgia's abortion ban put women's health at greater risk during pregnancy. Twenty-one doctors also reported that they were afraid of losing their medical licenses if they followed best medical practices when treating pregnant patients under the ban.

Eighteen Georgia OBGYNs reported they had already encountered cases in which the State's abortion ban contributed to maternal morbidity or mortality—in other words, they observed situations where the State's abortion ban contributed to a health complication or death of a mother. Georgia OBGYNs reported that they witnessed cases in which the abortion ban impeded treatment of pregnant women experiencing complications in the following scenarios:

Patients experiencing miscarriages turned away from hospitals: Doctors reported seeing patients who had been refused treatment for miscarriages at hospitals. Dr. Nisha Verma, a Senior Advisor on Reproductive Health Policy and Advocacy at ACOG and board-certified OBGYN providing care in Georgia, explained, "sometimes women are in the process of miscarrying, but the pregnancy still has cardiac activity. Georgia's law often creates confusion and delays in these situations."

¹Chen Y, Shiels MS, Uribe-Leitz T, et al. *Pregnancy-Related Deaths in the US, 2018-2022*. *JAMA Netw Open*. 2025;8(4):e254325. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2025.4325, available at <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2832320>.

Survey respondents reported the following instances in which patients did not receive timely and appropriate care for miscarriages:

- “I have had one patient turned away by an ER who had prolonged bleeding following a miscarriage and, as a result, required subsequent transfusion.”
- “Patient was rejected from several hospitals before arriving at our hospital for inevitable miscarriage at 10 weeks. She was bleeding heavily...” The doctor reported that eventually, the patient’s exam showed no fetal heart tones, allowing the doctor could perform an abortion without running afoul of Georgia’s abortion law.

Waiting for conditions to deteriorate: OBGYNs explained that under the State’s ban, they were unable to terminate pregnancies for women with complications that posed a serious threat to their health because those complications did not meet the State ban’s threshold for intervention.

- One doctor reported that “patients with severe hypertension, cardiomyopathy and lupus [are] unable to get an abortion” and now risk “significant morbidity and mortality because ‘their life is not yet in danger.’” The doctor further explained that the ban had contributed to “increased severe pre-eclampsia rates.”
 - According to the Preeclampsia Foundation, pre-eclampsia is a leading cause of maternal and infant illness and death.²
- Another doctor reported “many examples” of “not being able to offer induction or [abortion] to patients until they are ‘sick’ enough to justify.”
- Yet another doctor explained that they “couldn’t do anything for [a patient who was 14 weeks pregnant] who was 2cm dilated for weeks before finally miscarrying.”

Fear of seeking medical care: OBGYNs reported encountering women who were afraid to seek treatment for complications with abortions induced by medication or performed out of state, even when their lives were in danger.

- “I have had women nearly bleed to death because they delayed care or received inappropriate care trying to terminate their pregnancies with online resources.”
- Another reported having “[s]een at least one person seeking medical termination out of State who then need D&C [dilation and curettage] for incomplete [abortion] and seem to have delayed presenting to care due to concern we would hesitate to/not take care of them.”
- Yet another doctor reported a case of “[d]elay in the woman seeking care out of fear of punishment after taking meds that led to sepsis.”

² Preeclampsia Foundation Frequently Asked Questions, available at <https://www.preeclampsia.org/faqs>

Georgia women may be afraid to seek medical care for complications with abortions because they fear criminal prosecution. One Georgia prosecutor warned women that they should “prepare to be criminally prosecuted for having an abortion” under the ban,³ although prosecutors have not yet pursued such charges.

Two Georgia women have been investigated by police for improperly disposing of fetal remains following a miscarriage, and one was charged.⁴ The charges were ultimately dropped.⁵

Dr. Juhi Varshney, an emergency room doctor practicing in Georgia, urged women to seek treatment promptly if they experienced complications with an abortion.

³ Jolynn Dellinger and Stephanie K. Pell, *The criminalization of abortion and surveillance of women in a post-Dobbs world*, *The Brookings Institution*, available at <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-criminalization-of-abortion-and-surveillance-of-women-in-a-post-dobbs-world/>

⁴ WRDW, Here’s what we know about fetus found in trash at Grovetown Walmart, available at <https://www.wrdw.com/2024/07/24/new-details-emerge-after-fetus-found-dumpster-grovetown-walmart/>; NBC News, Woman’s arrest after miscarriage causes fear and anger, available at <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/georgia-arrest-miscarriage-fetal-personhood-rcna199400>.

⁵ NBC News, Woman’s arrest after miscarriage causes fear and anger, available at <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/georgia-arrest-miscarriage-fetal-personhood-rcna199400>.