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Academy of Medicine of Cleveland & Northern Ohio joins coalition of physicians working to protect reproductive freedom

CLEVELAND — The Academy of Medicine of Cleveland & Northern Ohio (AMCNO), an organization representing more than 6,000 Northeast Ohio physicians, today announced its support for *The Right to Reproductive Freedom with Protections for Health & Safety*, a proposed state constitutional amendment backers plan to place on Ohio’s statewide general election ballot this November.

“We’re proud to join with Ohio Physicians for Reproductive Rights in an effort to secure access to reproductive health care for all Ohioans,” said Dr. Jonathan Scharfstein, AMCNO President. “As medical practitioners, we care deeply about the health and well-being of our patients, all of whom have different and unique circumstances and needs.”

“We have grave concerns with any policy that erodes the sanctity of the physician-patient relationship,” Scharfstein said. “Abortion bans violate long-established and widely accepted principles of medical ethics by substituting legislators’ opinions for a physician’s individualized patient-centered counseling.”

AMCNO also expressed concern with any policy that would impose criminal penalties upon physicians for acting in the best interest of their patients, saying that these laws force a physician to choose between their oath to do no harm and protecting their civil, criminal and financial livelihoods. Scharfstein noted that the American Medical Association (AMA) Code of Medical Ethics places on physicians the “ethical responsibility to place patients’ welfare above the physician’s own self-interest or obligations to others.”

“Abortion bans place physicians at the ethical impasse of choosing between providing the best available medical care and risking substantial penalties, or protecting themselves personally,” Scharfstein said. “This dilemma challenges the very core of the Hippocratic Oath: ‘Do no harm.’”

In its support for the proposed Ohio constitutional amendment, AMCNO cites the AMA principle stating, “it is a violation of human rights when government intrudes into medicine and impedes access to safe, evidence-based reproductive health services, including abortion and contraception.”

The group also has concerns about the ability for Ohio to properly educate future medical professionals.

“If Ohio bans life-saving medical procedures, it makes it impossible to teach these procedures and creates a troubling ripple effect: If medical students cannot fully learn in Ohio, they will not come to school here, making them much less likely to train and practice here. Ohio risks losing OBGYN providers who are needed by all women in the state, if bans go into effect.”

AMCNO joins a growing coalition of physicians, allied medical professionals, business leaders and other non-partisan advocates that are mobilizing to ensure patients throughout Ohio have access to safe, legal, equitable, and comprehensive reproductive medical care including abortion and to protect the doctor-patient relationship from government interference, so that people can make their own reproductive health care decisions.

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