Ohio Psychological Association: Official Statement

Concern Over Texas Abortion Laws

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The Ohio Psychological Association stands in solidarity with the American Psychological Association’s position on the passage of the abortion laws in Texas. We are very concerned about the mental health of individuals who are denied the right to terminate an unwanted pregnancy and we are equally concerned with the targeting of individuals who are in support of the mother’s choice. While the state of Texas does not bar a woman’s ability receive an abortion directly, Texas law allows individuals who perform, financially support, or “aid and abet” those seeking an abortion, to be named in a civil suit. Additionally, the state of Texas offers those who are successful in such a lawsuit, a significant monetary reward, and the recovery of legal fees. This places incentive for the individual to seek a lawsuit and it places additional burden on the mother as others in support may serve consequences for her decision to terminate. The law applies to those who terminate after six weeks gestation despite reasons for termination to include sexual assault. Many women do not find out they are pregnant until after six weeks gestation, so this leaves them little or no time to process their decision leaving them more vulnerable. Additionally, there is no stipulation in the law that protects the mother from being sued for recovery of damages by the physician, family member or transportation service who may have been named in the civil suit.

Approximately sixty percent of women in the US who have abortions are already mothers and one-third of those women wish to terminate the pregnancy to care for children they already have. Not only does an unintended pregnancy contribute to increased risks of maternal depression and parenting stress, but it also compromises her ability to care for her existing children. Research has shown that diminished resources may lead to a child demonstrating slowed development. It is also shown that mothers who are stressed may invest less in her children, emotionally and financially. The likelihood of women who are denied an abortion to live in a household with adequate resources is dramatically decreased and likelihood that she develops a mental health problem post-partum is significantly increased. Research also shows that children who belong to mothers with unaddressed mental health problems will also develop mental health concerns. These families are also more likely to report poorer relationship quality and less social support.

Historically, this type of legislation has a disparate impact on women who are already medically underserved, underrepresented and under-resourced. It is important that as an organization committed to the service our communities that we advocate for the protections of the most vulnerable community members and provide a venue for all individuals to voice their concerns and preserve the right to access maternal health resources and make decisions for their bodies that are not dictated by the state or the courts.
Like the American Psychological Association, the Ohio Psychological Association also takes the position that this law is unconstitutional, and we are full support of the actions that the APA may take to see that this is recognized by the U.S. Supreme Court. It is imperative that we take quick action as Texas law has set a precedence that Florida and potentially other states are seeking to follow. It is our hope that the result be that laws such as these are barred from future development.

References:


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The Ohio Psychological Association, in Columbus, Ohio, is membership organization of approximately 1,550 Ohio psychologists. Its mission is to advance psychology as a science, as a profession and as a means of promoting human welfare. For more information or for a psychologist referral, visit www.ohpsych.org.