

September 24, 2024

Testimony of Kaitlyn Joshua
“Chaos and Control: How Trump Criminalized Women’s Health Care”
Before the Senate Finance Committee
September 24, 2024, 10 a.m. Eastern Time

Good morning. Thank you, Chairman Wyden, Ranking Member Crapo, and members of the Senate Finance Committee for having me here today.

My name is Kaitlyn Joshua and I’m from Louisiana. I’m here to talk about my own experience under extreme abortion bans in my home state soon after the Supreme Court eliminated the Federal right to abortion more than two years ago, and the problems these laws caused me and continue to cause other pregnant Louisianans and their families.

You see, I was turned away without care twice from two different emergency rooms in Louisiana while experiencing a painful and potentially dangerous miscarriage.

This was two Summers ago. My husband Landon and I were already parents to a curious and happy 4-year-old daughter when we found out I was pregnant again. We were thrilled. At least to us, this was the perfect time to have a second baby.

But this time, Louisiana’s new abortion ban affected my pregnancy right from the start. When I called to schedule my first prenatal appointment, I was told I would have to wait until I was 12 weeks pregnant, a month longer than for my first pregnancy. I asked if this was because of the Louisiana abortion ban and they said, 'Yes.'

Because of the abortion ban, prenatal appointments were purposely scheduled weeks later than normal, delayed further into pregnancy when miscarriages are less common, to avoid potential legal and criminal liability for medical providers.

Practically overnight, these laws were already compromising health care for all pregnant patients.

Aside from experiencing some mild cramping and spotting, my second pregnancy was going along okay until, around 11 weeks, just one week before my first official

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prenatal appointment, I started bleeding while also experiencing pain worse than childbirth.

My husband was at work, so I drove myself to the emergency room. There, the medical team examined me and told me that my fetus had stopped growing. I realized I was having a miscarriage, but because of the state's abortion ban, the health care team wouldn't even say that word. They sent me home telling me only that they would "Pray for me."

The next day, the bleeding and the pain got worse. I did not want to go back to the same hospital that had turned me away, so I met my mom and husband at a different hospital. I was losing so much blood, even the security guard knew to put me in a wheelchair.

The standard treatment for a miscarriage – what I was experiencing – is exactly the same treatment as abortion care, to empty the uterus by prescribing pills or a procedure called a D&C. It is an abortion. Yet in this second hospital, the staff told me that "we're not doing that now" and told me to go home and wait. Ultimately, it took weeks for me to completely pass the pregnancy – at home, on my own, without medical care. I was terrified.

This experience has made me see – and realize – how Black women like me die needlessly in and around childbirth.

Since telling my story, I have received hundreds of letters from women across Louisiana who have had similar experiences, and we know routine and potentially life-saving medical care is being denied in states across the country.

And I've met so many other women who are also suffering because of abortion bans like ours in Louisiana. 22 states have banned all or most abortions, and several states have criminal penalties for health care providers. As a result, doctors and other health care providers are afraid to treat patients who are miscarrying.

And that's why women like me are being denied the dignity of basic, essential, time-sensitive health care that can save lives. Abortion care.

Capable and caring physicians simply cannot practice medicine based on their training and expertise and Hippocratic oath.

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We are simply asking for – yet still being denied – the most basic level of maternal health care.

Sharing my story is not fun, nor is it easy. I don't like being away from home. I have two children now and part of me would like to forget the weeks of trauma I endured. But I know that I have to speak out. I owe it to those women who wrote to me, whom I've met. For women who look like me and women who don't.

This is an attack and an affront to our most basic fundamental rights. Life, liberty, health, happiness, self-determination. This is government and political interference in private health care decisions. How is this okay in a freedom-loving country in 2024?

Thank You.