

Experiences of reproductive and genetic healthcare professionals with abortion regulations in Ohio

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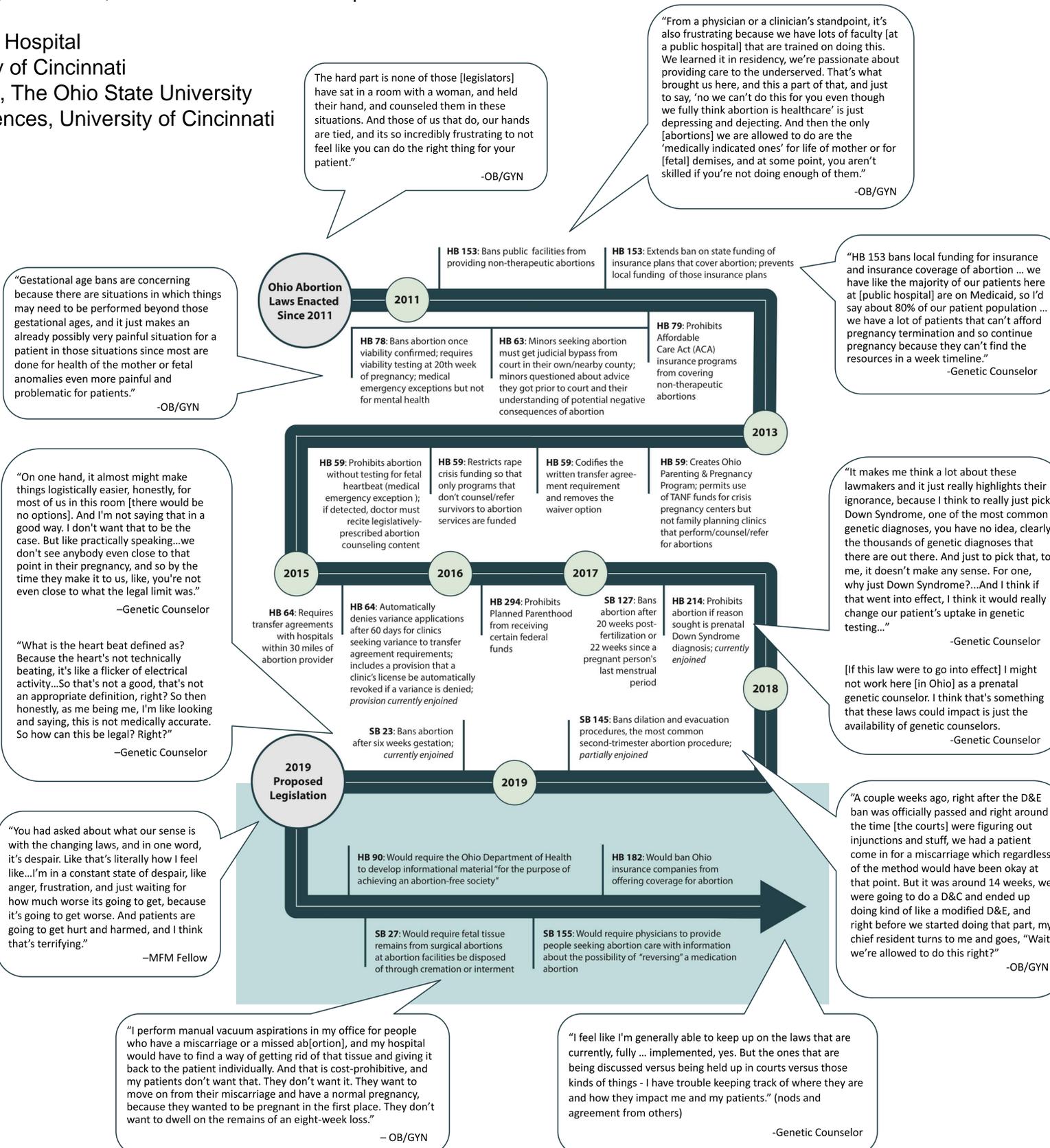


Introduction

- Twenty targeted regulations of abortion providers (TRAP) laws in Ohio have been enacted or proposed since 2010.
- TRAP laws have coincided with 12 clinic closures, leaving 9 free-standing abortion clinics operating in Ohio.
- Little is known about how state regulations and clinic closures impact the practice of reproductive and genetic health care providers in fields related to or adjacent to abortion, such as maternal fetal medicine, genetic counseling, and obstetrics and gynecology.
- This study examines how targeted regulations of abortion providers enacted in Ohio since 2010 impact healthcare professionals who do not provide abortion services in abortion clinics.

Methods

- Six focus groups with 21 obstetrician-gynecologists (n=2) and 13 prenatal genetic counselors (n=4) were conducted in Cincinnati, Cleveland, and Columbus (April – August 2019).
- Participants were recruited via professional society membership lists, professional networks, and snowball sampling.
- Focus groups were audio recorded, transcribed, and coded for thematic analysis using Atlas.ti.



Results

Participants conveyed that TRAP laws and institutional interpretations of these laws:

- Interfere with provider/patient relationships
- Undermine professional judgment
- Result in widespread confusion about the status of legislation and a desire for a singular source for information
- Are detrimental for patients' reproductive autonomy
- Contribute to healthcare providers' moral distress, compassion fatigue, and despair

Conclusions

- Inadequate translation of information about abortion legislation among reproductive healthcare professionals negatively impacts patient care.
- Innovative communication tools and legislative change may ameliorate this frustration.
- While this phase of study focused on obstetrician-gynecologists and genetic counselors, future research may explore the extent to which healthcare providers interfacing with uterine transplant understand and experience Ohio's reproductive healthcare regulations that were designed to target abortion providers.
- Our results demonstrate that these laws impact healthcare providers working outside of abortion clinics, thus multidisciplinary uterine transplant teams ought to proactively address which of these regulations have or could affect their practices and patients.