

Testimony of Lauren Miller
Before the United States House Committee on Ways & Means
“Access to Health Care in America: Ensuring Resilient Emergency Medical Care”

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Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Chu, and Members of the House Ways and Means Committee, thank you for having me here today. I appreciate the opportunity to address how state-mandated bans on essential medical treatment delayed my access to care, creating an unnecessary medical emergency.

My name is Lauren Miller. I’m an 8th generation Texan and live here in Dallas with my husband, Jason, and our two young sons. I work with incentives for sustainable agriculture; Jason is a biochemist.

In July 2022, when our first-born son was a year old, we were thrilled to find out that I was pregnant again. But this pregnancy was different. Just weeks in, I wound up in the Emergency Room following 36 hours of unrelenting nausea and vomiting.

It was there, while being treated for severe dehydration, that we learned I was carrying twins. I was so sick but so excited. I had always wanted three kids close together!

We called the twins “Los Dos” and every night, Jason would give my belly two kisses, one for each.

At the routine 12-week ultrasound, everything changed.

The doctor explained that while one of the twins was thriving, the other was not. On the scan, she pointed out two large fluid masses where his brain should have been developing. More testing brought even more devastating fatal diagnoses.

In speaking with our team of doctors, nurses, and genetic counselors, we kept arriving at the same awful conclusion: This twin was going to die. It was just a matter of how soon. And every day that he continued to grow, he put our healthy twin and myself at greater risk.

Because of Texas’s insidious new abortion laws, my doctors were terrified to suggest an abortion of one unviable twin even though this would have saved the other twin.

There were no next steps. There were no treatment options. It was a devastating diagnosis and we had reached the point where healthcare ends in Texas.

Can you imagine trying to get necessary medical care when your doctor is afraid to explain – or even say – what your possible treatment options are?

In Texas now, these cruel, inhumane laws trump, even paralyze, the judgment and training and experience of astute and caring medical professionals and result in a stunning lack of options for patients like me.

If my set of circumstances had occurred just a few months prior, before Texas' abortion bans took effect, the Maternal Fetal Medicine specialist treating me could have performed a single fetal abortion immediately. That is what we wanted and needed.

Instead, we were sent home to wait and see whether the doctor's prediction of my decline would come true – that I would get sicker and sicker.

Sure enough, just three days later, Jason rushed me to the emergency room for a second time. I was vomiting so severely that I thought the placenta would detach and I would bleed out.

Persistent extreme vomiting at this point in pregnancy triples the odds of placental abruption – another emergency situation.

I was severely dehydrated and shaking uncontrollably as the team in the emergency room worked to stabilize me. Lab results showed that I was at risk of kidney failure, coma, heart attack, swelling of the brain, or death. There was one solution - the single fetal abortion. But once again, I wasn't just denied this care – we couldn't even discuss it.

Abortion bans have eliminated emergency reproductive care in Texas. We can't just be in declining condition. Politicians in Texas force us to linger in physical and psychological pain until we're near death.

Despite years of medical training and practice, my doctor's ability to offer care was reduced to repeating over and over and over "I'm so sorry."

The State of Texas would kill all three of us rather than let my doctor and I determine what was best for me. Where are my human rights to health, bodily autonomy, and life?

So, we tabled our grief and turned our attention to fleeing our home state to protect the health and lives of our viable twin and myself.

What about the people who don't have funds or connections or resources to travel? I understand how very privileged we were. But no one should ever have to rely on privilege to access emergency, life-saving health care. To make decisions about their own bodies, their own lives, and their own families.

This level of government overreach just can't be the way it is. Not in Texas. Not in the other 13 states that ban and or criminalize abortion care. Not anywhere.

Why is half of this country undeserving of bodily autonomy?

We need federal protection for abortion care – no matter who you are, no matter where you live. And we need federal protection for the doctor-patient relationship to prevent government interference in a patient's decision-making process. Congress has the power and the duty to act and stop this subjugation and dehumanization of women.

Thank you.