

## Office of Public Affairs update



### *A quarterly update from the American Society for Reproductive Medicine Office of Public Affairs on key developments in reproductive health policy*

#### **INTRODUCTION: THIS COLUMN AND THE AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR REPRODUCTIVE MEDICINE OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

At a time when access to reproductive medicine is increasingly subject to decisions of state and federal lawmakers and nonelected jurists, the Office of Public Affairs has been incredibly busy. Here, and in future issues, we offer a glimpse into our current priorities, initiatives, and accomplishments.

#### **Background**

As a leading reproductive medicine organization, the ASRM represents members on key matters before federal and state governments. We communicate membership priorities and inform federal and state policies as decision makers examine legal and ethical issues pertaining to reproductive medicine. This work includes providing testimony and education to the congress, state legislatures, and government stakeholders; working proactively with policymakers and their staff as well as agency leadership and personnel; participating in coalitions; coordinating with allied medical societies and associations to advance shared goals; representing the ASRM at the American Medical Association; cohosting an annual federal advocacy day and complementary state activities; and monitoring and recruiting ASRM members to engage as we monitor the legislation of import to the field in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. This work is spearheaded, under the guidance of the ASRM's Chief Advocacy and Policy Officer (CAPO), Sean Tipton, by the Director of Government Affairs, Sarah Bogdan, in coordination with the Government Affairs Manager, Jessie Losch.

This important work is amplified by the public affairs team, which includes Melissa Grigsby, Communications Director, and Riley Rogers, Social Media Specialist, who report to the CAPO. This team proactively drives an agenda of ambitious public relations and media relations to expand general knowledge about our issues and work, promoting awareness of the social, moral, and medical relevance of medical issues in the field and the important role of reproductive medicine in today's society. Among other things, the team fulfills media requests, issues news releases and position statements, organizes and coordinates press events, and serves as a liaison to public information counterparts in major health care organizations. They also manage the ASRM's ever-growing presence of social media.

The Office of Public Affairs is also home to the ASRM Center for Policy and Leadership (CPL). The CPL, established in

2020 and led by Director Becca O'Connor under the guidance of the CAPO, is a nonpartisan think tank working to advance reproductive medicine worldwide. The CPL's initiatives are designed to inform decisions that impact who has access to and how providers deliver reproductive care and services. The CPL is further committed to providing tools, training, and resources geared to develop future leaders in the field.

Questions for the Office of Public Affairs can be directed to [publicaffairs@asrm.org](mailto:publicaffairs@asrm.org).

#### **LATEST NEWS**

- On June 24, 2022, the Supreme Court released its decision on *Dobbs*, overturning the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision that gave the federal government the authority to regulate abortion. Days later, the CPL released a report titled "State Abortion Trigger Laws: Potential Implications for Reproductive Medicine." Cited by outlets such as the New York Times, The Hill, and others, this report, developed in partnership with attorneys from the firm of Hogan Lovells, LLP, spotlighted the intersection between the abortion policy and access to reproductive medicine. A second report, focusing on additional state laws, was released in October 2022. The CPL will continue to develop and share related analyses and updates as states enact and courts interpret abortion restriction laws, with a key focus on the implications for assisted reproductive technology.
- In September 2022, the ASRM member Dr. Ginny Ryan, MD, MA, testified before the US House Veteran Affairs Committee in support of HR 1975, legislation that would compel the US Department of Veterans Affairs to provide family-building services by lifting current coverage barriers in the veterans affairs health care system that needlessly shut out veterans who want to become a parent.
- Our policy team was crucial in supporting the Right to Build Families Act, groundbreaking legislation introduced by the senators Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) and Patty Murray (D-WA) and congresswoman Susan Wild (D-PA). The bill would protect people's right to access assisted reproductive technology, including in vitro fertilization, despite a spate of extreme abortion bans on federal and state levels. The ASRM also supports the Comprehensive Cancer Survivorship Act. The bill was introduced by the representatives Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-FL) and Mark DeSaulnier (D-CA) and senators Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) and Ben Cardin (D-MD), and it would, among other key pillars, address fertility preservation because it relates to childhood and adolescent cancer.
- The members of the ASRM testified before their state legislature in opposition to abortion bans that could negatively impact the practice of in vitro fertilization. Members from nearly every state also sent letters to their elected officials, weighing in on crucial pieces of legislation.

Rebecca W. O'Connor, J.D.  
Center for Policy & Leadership, American Society for  
Reproductive Medicine, Washington, District of Columbia

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.xfre.2023.02.004>