



## PROTECT PATIENTS FROM REFUSALS TO PROVIDE HEALTH CARE IN YOUR STATE

Across the nation, health care providers are refusing – based on religious beliefs – to treat patients seeking health care. Because of religion, some hospitals have turned away patients seeking care even when their lives are in jeopardy. These practices put religious beliefs over patients' needs and they can – and have – resulted in infection, infertility, and even death.

Voters know they need policies that put patients first, and they are looking for policymakers to ensure that their health care providers won't refuse them care. A March 2017 nationally representative survey done on behalf of the National Women's Law Center found that a majority of voters oppose laws that allow insurers, hospitals, and other providers to refuse patients care because of religious objections. Voters also support policies that make sure all hospitals will provide a patient with the right care for her situation, including abortion.

### Patients Need Policies That Put Their Health Ahead of Hospitals' Religious Beliefs

Patients are suffering because they are being turned away from health care treatment due to providers' religious beliefs. Hospitals have:

- Refused to provide patients with life-saving miscarriage management;
- Refused to treat a woman who needs an abortion, or even just to provide her with information or referrals;
- Refused to provide patients with sterilization procedures at the time of cesarean delivery;
- Refused to provide care to LGBTQ individuals.

At the same time, doctors and nurses who work for religiously-affiliated institutions are facing discrimination simply because they want to help patients. Doctors and nurses have been:

- Prohibited from helping patients obtain reproductive health care;
- Threatened with demotion or loss of jobs if they speak out about the importance of abortion and other reproductive health care;
- Prohibited from providing abortion care on their own time at separate clinics.

You can protect patients in your state by passing laws that explicitly require hospitals to give patients the treatment they reasonably expect to receive, and that protect health care employees from discrimination if they provide necessary care or speak out about the importance of patient access to care.

Policies that will work together to protect patient access to health care include the following:

**Protecting Patients in Hospitals:** Lawmakers can prohibit any health care entity from blocking a doctor's ability to provide medically appropriate care and medically accurate information to a patient about the patient's health status and medical options. Lawmakers can also require hospitals in the state to provide health and life saving medical services when needed, regardless of the religious affiliation of the institution.

**Abortion Provider Nondiscrimination:** Lawmakers should specifically prohibit hospitals and other health care employers from taking adverse actions against employees because of the employee's participation in abortion services, including on their own time at separate facilities. Lawmakers should also protect employees' ability to make public statements about abortion without fear of retaliation from their employer.



**Repealing Religious Exemption Laws:** Lawmakers should repeal any state laws that allow hospitals to use religious beliefs to deny patients health care.

**The National Women’s Law Center can help you craft a legislative agenda that is specifically tailored to protect patients in your state. NWLC can:**

- Provide research to identify specific needs or gaps in policies;
- Assist in crafting legislation;
- Provide state level data analysis;
- Help connect you with other advocates, legislators, and experts; and/or
- Create supporting resources including:
  - o Sample graphics and tweets;
  - o Talking points; and
  - o Fact sheets.

If you are interested in pursuing a policy agenda to improve the lives of young people, please contact the National Women’s Law Center by e-mail at [roadmap@nwlc.org](mailto:roadmap@nwlc.org) or by phone at 202-588-5180.

