

August 5, 2026

Dear Senator,

The undersigned organizations committed to reproductive rights, justice, and health equity urge Senators to vote against the confirmation of Dr. Erica Schwartz to serve as the Director of the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC). Dr. Schwartz's testimony before the Senate Health, Education, Labor & Pensions (HELP) Committee included deeply concerning promises to increase abortion surveillance and vague, unfounded assertions that states are "hiding" abortions under the guise of emergency care. These statements reveal a nominee who would approach this important job through an ideological lens, and whose actions could be devastating for patients and providers nationwide.

The primary responsibility of the CDC is to protect public health and safety by controlling and preventing disease, injury, and disability both in the U.S. and globally. To achieve this, the CDC engages in research, data collection, health guidance, and preventive measures, working collaboratively with states. Currently, the CDC collects data on abortions from states on a voluntary basis, including the states of residence of individuals seeking abortions, their reasons for seeking care, and the methods of care provided.

During the HELP Committee hearing, Senator Hawley implied that there was a problem with states choosing not to voluntarily report this data, as if states were trying to hide something. Dr. Schwartz was asked by Senator Hawley if she "[w]ould commit to trying to get as much information [and]...to collect that data from... those states that are currently holding out and not giving it..." Senator Hawley's push for mandatory abortion data collection follows Project 2025's playbook, which proposed making abortion surveillance reporting to the CDC mandatory by weaponizing federal funding as a means of enforcement. Rather than reaffirming CDC policy of 50+ years—that states are able to decide for themselves whether to submit data—Dr. Schwartz instead appeared to guarantee Senator Hawley that she would take up his charge, stating "Senator you have my commitment, abortion surveillance is *absolutely* a critical component of what the CDC is currently doing...yes, I agree I will look into that."

Dr. Schwartz's response suggests a willingness to compromise CDC's longstanding, decades-long practice in order to secure a confirmation vote. This would cause concern at any time, but is especially alarming at a time when people capable of pregnancy are at heightened risk for surveillance, criminalization, and targeting by hostile officials. This calls into serious question her qualifications for the position of director of the CDC.

Dr. Schwartz also made unprovoked and unfounded statements regarding emergency abortion services, implying that states are not accurately reporting data and are trying to "hide" abortions as "emergency services" saying CDC needs to "make sure that certain states are not conflating emergency services and hiding abortions in that emergency services case definition." She further opined that the CDC "need[s] to make sure we are pulling out 'true abortions' and making sure we're really having clear case definitions regarding abortion so the data is actually accurate." These statements not only undermine the fact that emergency abortion care is a valid and increasingly necessary form of health care but also raises concerns about how she might misuse her role as CDC Director to launch unfounded investigations into states that are trying to protect people's access to the abortion care they need.

Dr. Schwartz's comments on abortion emergency care are especially troubling given the Trump Administration actions undermining protections for emergency abortion care. Last year, the Trump administration rescinded Biden-era guidance on the Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act (EMTALA)—a long-standing federal law that protects access to emergency care in hospital emergency rooms. It also dropped an enforcement action against the State of Idaho, whose abortion ban directly conflicts with EMTALA—sowing confusion and fear for health care providers and patients experiencing dangerous pregnancy complications. As a result of this confusion and fear, hospitals have turned away patients in dire circumstances, and some women have suffered serious complications or died because they could not get the health-preserving and life-saving abortion care they needed. Dr. Schwartz's attempt to distinguish "true abortion"—a term that is both stigmatizing and lacks any basis in law or medicine—from emergency abortion care is either reckless or purposefully seeking to push forward an ideological agenda. In either event, it signals that Dr. Schwartz should not lead an agency dedicated to public health, since such comments from a national public health leader will further contribute to the confusion and fear in hospital emergency rooms and will lead to more needless suffering and to deaths.

Public health in the U.S. is in a fragile state. Our country is navigating multiple public health crises, including increased spread of infectious diseases; exceptionally high maternal mortality rates, particularly for Black women; and the post-*Dobbs* landscape of abortion access, which forces one in five people to travel out of state to obtain care. In the years since *Roe v. Wade* was wrongly overturned, studies have shown a significant increase in criminalization related to abortion, birth, and loss of pregnancy, disproportionately affecting Black, Brown, and low-income women. We cannot afford to confirm a CDC Director who has signaled a willingness to increase surveillance of people seeking abortion care and cater to anti-abortion extremists' demands. Moreover, as Director of the CDC, Schwartz would have the authority to conduct biased studies or suppress evidence that yet again proves abortion is safe. This could result in further mis- and disinformation that seeks to mislead people about the science and safety of abortion care.

For these reasons, we urge you to oppose the confirmation of Erica Schwartz for Director of the CDC.

Signed,

Abortion Forward (OH)

All* Above All

American Atheists

Arkansas Black Gay Men's Forum

Black Voters Matter Fund

Clearinghouse on Women's Issues

Equality California

Feminist Majority Foundation

If/When/How: Lawyering for Reproductive Justice

National Abortion Federation

National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum

National Council of Jewish Women

National Health Law Program

National Latina Institute for Reproductive Justice
National Network of Abortion Funds
National Organization for Women
National Women's Law Center Action Fund
New Disabled South
PAI
People Power United
Physicians for Reproductive Health
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
Population Connection Action Fund
Positive Women's Network-USA
Pregnancy Justice
Reproductive Freedom for All
RootsAction
Silver State Equality