Anti-abortion politicians across the country have spent decades trying to force abortion care providers to share stigmatizing, medically unproven information— in recent years, even suggesting that abortions can be “reversed.” These practices are not supported by science and are simply an attempt to deceive, pressure, and shame patients while discrediting abortion care providers.

That’s why Abortion Care Network launched a campaign to end abortion deception in the first three months of 2018. With abortion care nurse, researcher, and ACN board member Monica McLemore as our expert spokesperson, we were determined to share a simple, factual message with the public: Patients need medically accurate information, not politically-motivated deception and shame.

We put up billboards near fake health centers in California’s Bay Area, mobilized supporters on social media and through our members, and spoke with the press in an effort to reach as many people as possible.

We reached over two million people with the important message that we trust patients and providers, with nearly 4,000 people pledging to help us end abortion deception. We reached a broad audience with articles in Politico, Ms., Rewire, Colorlines, Capital Public Radio, and SF Weekly, and more.* We also added our voices to chorus of advocates demanding the California Board of Registered Nursing bar unproven treatments from continuing education classes— and it looks like they will.

*Continued on next page
**Patients need medically accurate information, and abortion care providers need to be able to support patients in considering their options without state-mandated deception, pressure, or shame. When anti-abortion extremists mandate misinformation and attack the integrity of abortion care providers, they make it more difficult for patients to seek support from providers before, during, and after abortion.**

We trust abortion care providers to provide compassionate, evidence-based care, and we trust patients to know what decision is best for them and to be the experts in their own lives.

You can’t reverse that.

*To read this coverage, go to abortioncarenetwork.org/be-informed.*

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**SUPPORTING THE FRONT LINES**

At Abortion Care Network, we know it takes a village to make abortion access a reality. From physicians and clinic owners unwilling to back down from unjust legislation, to the legal and advocacy experts. Our community is vast, bold, and unwavering in its commitment to ensure that people seeking abortions can get the care they need.

Most of us would agree: To protect abortion access, we must make sure that abortion providers are equipped with the tools they need to deliver care to their communities. But what does it really mean to be an abortion care provider? Some think of “providers” as clinic owners or doctors, but at ACN, we define “abortion providers” as everyone involved in the daily operations of clinic and patient care, including frontline staff. This includes the person who schedules your appointment and tells you what to expect at your visit; the front desk staff who welcome you; nurses, counselors, lab techs and office managers who review your patient history, do your lab work, and answer questions and concerns without judgment. Every person working in the clinic provides care for an abortion patient each step of the way, and faces the daily challenges of making sure that people can access necessary care.

Frontline clinic staff may be less highlighted when talking about abortion provision, yet they are essential to ensuring that independent clinics thrive. That’s why ACN has developed programming to support abortion providers across the United States. We create avenues for networking, information sharing and other resources specifically designed to meet the needs of frontline staff whose professional development opportunities are often limited by abortion stigma and lack of resources. Uniting Our Voices is ACN’s media and messaging program that prepares frontline staff to speak publicly about their work in their local communities and on national platforms. ACN’s Provider Resilience Initiative connects clinics with volunteer social workers trained and ready to support staff in navigating some of the stressors that come with providing necessary care in a political climate that can be hostile and unsupportive.

Abortion Care Network appreciates those working on the front lines of abortion care and is committed to ensuring they have the support they need to provide exceptional care to patients. To learn more about ACN’s Uniting Our Voices, and/or the Provider Resilience Initiative programs, and how you can support independent abortion providers, please contact an ACN staff member at info@abortioncarenetwork.org.
Game Changers: Advanced Practitioners to the Rescue

Advancing health and justice in abortion provision is at the heart of ACN’s mission. Nurses are often called the “heart” or “backbone” of medicine, and we know that they are invaluable to expanding and ensuring abortion care in this country. Oprah’s O Magazine highlighted Nurses and ACN member, Red River Women’s Clinic, of Fargo, ND in their May 2018 issue. Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs) are working to change the game for all of us. Some APRNs are stepping into a legacy of provision and serving rural communities, while others are breaking new ground in full spectrum care for families, with a focus on community needs. Here are a few of ACN’s APRN game changers.

Helen Weems, FNP APRN, Owner and Director of All Families Healthcare

Who are you? Helen Weems, Family Nurse Practitioner, Owner and Director of All Families Healthcare, Whitefish, MT.

How are you changing the game for abortion care? Reopening the clinic after its destruction in 2014, under the mentorship of its original owner Susan Cahill. It’s pretty revolutionary that our practice is owned, directed, and staffed by Advanced Practice Clinicians. Currently I am a plaintiff in a lawsuit challenging the state law limiting abortion provision to physicians and physician assistants. We are pushing one more logical step, to include all Advanced Practice Clinicians (APCs), including NPs, and Nurse-Midwives.

Why does this matter? As of 2014, over half of Montana women lived in the 93% of counties without an abortion clinic. Winning this case would not only expand abortion access in Montana exponentially, but it would set an important legal precedent, paving the way to expand the scope of practice of APCs nationwide to include abortion provision.

What is your one wish for the future of Abortion Care Provision? That abortion is a normalized component of primary care, easily accessible to anyone, anywhere. That all people, regardless of who they are or where they live, have unfettered access if and when they parent. That a parent is provided resources, and can raise their children in safe, healthy, and nurturing spaces.

Julie Jenkins, NP, Maine Family Planning

Who are you? Julie Jenkins, Women’s Health Nurse Practitioner, Maine Family Planning, Belfast, ME.

How are you changing the game for abortion care? Right now, a legal battle to change the restrictive physician-only law. APRNs have been safely performing abortions in some states, including Oregon, Vermont, and New Hampshire. California repealed its physician-only law in 2013. We want APRNs in Maine to provide medication and in-clinic abortion procedures, and so does our community.

Why does this matter? Accessibility is a shared patient and provider issue, and Maine is one of the most rural states in this country. Physician-only laws dictate when, how, and who patients go to for abortion services. Without local providers, barriers such as travel, child care, and other issues, regardless of the patient’s income, are insurmountable. This case may set a new legal precedent for APRNs in abortion care nationwide.

What is your one wish for the future of Abortion Care Provision? That all women would have access to a full range of healthcare, including abortion and maternal healthcare in their neighborhood. That future providers will use this potential legal win to their advantage. Maybe other APRNs will be inspired to challenge laws in their community, and if so, I encourage them to contact the ACLU!

Dr. Nikia Grayson, DNP MPH CNM FNP, CHOICES: Memphis Center for Reproductive Health

Who are you? Nikia Grayson, Family Nurse Midwife, CHOICES: Memphis Center for Reproductive Health, Memphis, TN.

How are you changing the game for abortion care? CHOICES and I are opening the first birth center in Memphis. It will be a comprehensive reproductive health center offering birth, abortion, GYN, LGBTQAI health services, and prenatal services in one building. As a public health activist, anthropologist, and nurse midwife, I am working to ensure that health centers are open and responsive to the needs of the community.

Why does this matter? Pregnant people deserve to have birthing options. All people deserve high quality, non-judgmental care with the provider of their choice. With the goal to normalize midwifery care in Memphis and improve health outcomes in our community, it is hard to argue against a comprehensive clinic. Breaking ground on this reproductive health center secures that space - a place where all persons have the right and support to make decisions regarding their sexual and reproductive health. As a midwife, I am enacting a vision of accessible community-based care that will transform health outcomes in Memphis, TN.

What is your one wish for the future of Abortion Care Provision? That barriers that prevent APRNs from providing abortion care will be removed. Removing those barriers could ensure that any person who needs access to reproductive health can get it.
The staff who work at independent abortion clinics provide care for three out of every five people who have an abortion in the United States. This makes frontline staff some of the most important health professionals in the field of medicine. Yet abortion stigma and lack of resources limits their access to professional development opportunities. Let them know they are valued and appreciated by showing your support today!

Now through July 4th, every dollar donated to ACN’s Staff Support Fund goes towards professional development scholarships, on-site training, and the resources staff need to thrive while providing essential healthcare. This programming supports staff working on the front lines of abortion care; many are working in the last clinics open in their state.

As a Staff Support Fund donor, you can be assured that your donation goes directly to help frontline staff deliver compassionate, patient-centered care. Donate today at www.abortioncarenetwork.org/donate.

Look inside to learn more about some of the frontline staff who need your support today!