In August 2017, Abortion Care Network released the first-ever report on the state of independent abortion care providers (Indies) in the United States. The report presented findings from years of tracking abortion care providers, the type of care they provide, and the incidence of clinic closures.

Independent abortion clinics collectively provide the majority of abortion care in the US, often providing care when and where others do not, operating in the most hostile states, and providing dignified care as pregnancy progresses. However, independent clinics are closing at an unprecedented rate: 28 percent of independent clinics have closed in the past five years.

Clinics close for a number of reasons: anti-abortion legislation, anti-choice extremism, and systemic financial pressures being chief among them. When clinics close, patients are forced to travel farther, take additional time away from work, find childcare, and spend more out-of-pocket. For some, anti-abortion restrictions and clinic closures mean they may not be able to get care at all. Communities need clinics to make the right to abortion a reality, and clinics need their communities to help keep their doors open.

We are excited to open up a larger, louder, evidence-backed conversation about the crucial role Indies play in the abortion care landscape – and that means talking about the very real challenges that Indies and their patients face and ways we can help. To ensure continued access to abortion care in the US, Indies and the patients they serve need legal protection and community support. Proactive state and federal legislative efforts, as well as direct financial and volunteer supports, are critical to ensuring the well-being of these providers.

We hope you enjoy the poster-sized infographic summary included in this newsletter. Raising awareness is one way you can help ensure abortion access in your community – so hang up the poster and share these findings with your colleagues or community.

The full report can be found at abortioncarenetwork.org/CommunitiesNeedClinics
WE REFUSE TO BACK DOWN: PROACTIVE POLICY EFFORTS

It is undeniable that it has been a challenging year for those of us who care about reproductive health and reproductive justice. Also undeniable: the fierce advocates, activists, and abortion care providers who refuse to back down in the fight for justice. In an era when our movement expected few victories and anticipated that many of our efforts would be reactive, we’re thrilled to see many inspiring and proactive efforts to protect and expand access to abortion care. A few efforts you should know about:

**Maine Nurse Practitioners and Midwives Sue to Provide Abortion Care**

**What’s happening:** Nurse Practitioners and Certified Nurse Midwives – along with the ACLU, independent abortion care provider Maine Family Planning, and the Maine Planned Parenthood affiliate – are suing to allow advanced practice clinicians to provide medication and aspiration (or surgical) abortion care.

**Why it matters:** A victory in court would only directly impact providers in Maine, but the decision could have implications nationally. If the court finds in favor of the Maine Nurse Practitioners and Midwives who want to provide the safe, legal abortion services they are qualified to provide, it will set a precedent for courts in other states to follow suit.

**Illinois Expands Insurance Coverage for Abortion Care**

**What happened:** In September, the republican governor of Illinois signed a law expanding insurance coverage for abortion care for those with Medicaid and state employee insurance, stating that “no woman should be forced to make a different decision than another woman could make purely based on her income.”

**Why it matters:** Our movement has long asserted that bodily autonomy and access to reproductive healthcare are not partisan issues – rather, these are fundamental human rights. Because of the bold work of activists on the ground – including All* Above All and the Chicago Abortion Fund – access to abortion care in Illinois will no longer hinge as decisively on a person’s income or ZIP code.

**Hawaii Physician Sues to Make Medication Abortion More Accessible**

**What’s happening:** A doctor in Hawaii – along with the ACLU and several colleagues – is challenging an FDA regulation that makes it needlessly difficult to access abortion – especially in areas without an abortion provider. The rule requires patients be handed Mifepristone – one of the two medications used for medication abortion – at a clinic, physician’s office, or hospital by clinicians who have pre-registered with the drug manufacturer, rather than being able to pick up the medication at a pharmacy after consulting with their provider.

**Why it matters:** This lawsuit will be heard in federal court and applies to an FDA rule, so the decision could have implications nationwide. If the court rules in favor of overturning this burdensome and medically unjustified rule, patients throughout the country could see increased access to abortion in their communities as abortion medication could become available at pharmacies.

**Crisis Pregnancy Centers in One Washington County Must Post Honest Signage**

**What happened:** The King County Board of Health in Washington State passed a new rule that requires Crisis Pregnancy Centers (CPCs) to post a notice on-site and in all advertising – in large font and in ten languages – stating: “This facility is not a health care facility.”

**Why it matters:** CPCs are not, in fact, licensed health care facilities – but they intentionally deceive pregnant people into thinking they are. CPCs spread false information that not only stigmatizes patients and their decisions, but may keep them from getting the health care they need to end or continue a pregnancy. Hawaii passed a similar law this summer, and we’d love to see this simple, bold demand made in every state!
UNITING OUR VOICES

Uniting Our Voices (UOV), Abortion Care Network’s communications program, provides small-group trainings where independent abortion care providers learn media and messaging skills, build meaningful relationships with colleagues, and receive continued communications support. By elevating the unique perspectives of independent abortion care providers at the local, state, and national levels, UOV increases public awareness and support for the incredible work that providers do every day.

Since the program’s launch in October 2016, UOV spokespeople have written, been interviewed for, or been quoted in over 100 mainstream media pieces – reaching over 400,000,000 readers, viewers, and listeners. Combined with Abortion Care Network’s two major awareness campaigns – #CelebrateAbortionProviders and the launch of our Communities Need Clinics report – Indies are becoming more and more visible to the public and to patients in need of their essential care.

Between March and September 2017, Uniting Our Voices has provided three in-person trainings. Trainees represent 28 clinics in 24 states and include clinic owners and administrators, physicians and nurses, patient advocates and phlebotomists, office managers and advocacy directors. ACN is proud to support these inspiring spokespeople!

PROVIDER RESILIENCE INITIATIVE

The Provider Resilience Initiative (PRI) is a program of Abortion Care Network in collaboration with Social Workers for Reproductive Justice. PRI in-services lead providers through conversations around stress management, secondary trauma, and self-care – all with the goal of helping to sustain the crucial yet sometimes challenging work they do.

The trainings are provided by a cohort of volunteer social workers, each of whom covers a different region of the country. To date, the Provider Resilience Initiative has reached over 200 independent abortion care providers across the U.S., including clinic owners, physicians, counselors, and other frontline staff. Eleven trainings have been held in ten states, with two more trainings planned for later this year.

Providers shared with us that learning about how stress and trauma manifest in the body was helpful in understanding personal emotional triggers. Many found solace in processing issues of isolation and realizing that they weren’t alone and found new ways of relating to coworkers. One staff person said that the training let them know “we matter too,” and another shared a feeling of hope after learning “a lot of people feel the same way.”

Even though providing abortion care can sometimes be a stressful job, our members will tell you that it’s some of the most fulfilling, meaningful work they’ve ever done. In a political and social climate that doesn’t always support providers, ACN and our supporters are proud to help take care of these caretakers.
We have a $5,000 matching grant!

That means your tax-deductible gift to ACN will be matched dollar-for-dollar up to $5,000 between now and November 16th.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

Give To the Max is a 24-hour giving extravaganza where donors come together to support nonprofits that inspire them. We hope ACN is one of the nonprofits you choose to support this year! You can donate on November 16, 2017, or schedule your donation as early as November 1, 2017.

Visit giveMN.org and search for Abortion Care Network to donate.