



# MASSACHUSETTS MEDICAL SOCIETY

*Every physician matters, each patient counts.*

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF S.1579  
AN ACT TO ELIMINATE BARRIERS AND EXPAND ABORTION ACCESS  
BEFORE THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HEALTH  
June 10, 2025**

**The Massachusetts Medical Society (MMS) wishes to be recorded in strong support of S.1579, *An Act to eliminate barriers and expand abortion access.***

The MMS is a professional association of over 24,000 physicians, residents, and medical students across all clinical disciplines, organizations, and practice settings. The Medical Society is committed to advocating on behalf of patients, for a better health care system, and on behalf of physicians, to help them provide the best care possible. The MMS recognizes that abortion is an essential medical component in the continuum of reproductive health care. Furthermore, our policy asserts that the only criteria necessary to consent to an abortion should be pregnancy and medical decision-making capacity. Accordingly, we support S.1579, which would eliminate the Commonwealth's outdated and harmful parental involvement law, removing a significant barrier to timely, safe abortion care for young people under the age of 16.

As physicians, we are guided by the principle that every patient deserves access to comprehensive, timely, and evidence-based health care. The current law in Massachusetts requires young people to obtain permission from a parent or judge to access abortion care, which can place an undue burden on some of our most vulnerable patients, delaying timely access to care. Young people seeking abortion care with the requisite decision-making capacity, as determined by a physician, are capable of understanding their options and making informed decisions in consultation with trained medical providers. In fact, physicians are uniquely qualified to assess a young person's capacity for informed consent — an essential part of any clinical interaction. Physicians are trained to provide non-directive counseling, identify signs of abuse or coercion, and ensure a patient's emotional and physical safety. Physicians are also legally mandated to report any suspected abuse to appropriate authorities, a responsibility we take seriously.



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Research confirms what we witness in practice. According to a 2019 study published in the *Journal of Obstetrics & Gynecology*, the judicial bypass system causes harmful delays and worsened health outcomes for minors.<sup>1</sup> The study found that young people in Massachusetts who went through the bypass process experienced an average delay of 15 days in accessing care, nearly twice as long as those who obtained parental consent.<sup>2</sup> These delays can limit clinical options and intensify emotional distress. Young people who were forced through the judicial bypass system had significantly greater odds of becoming ineligible for medication abortion due to delay, a troubling outcome that could have been avoided with timely access to care.<sup>3</sup> Notably, these barriers disproportionately impact young people of color and those from low-income backgrounds, exacerbating existing inequities in our health care system.<sup>4</sup>

Parental consent restricts young people's bodily autonomy, forces them through a traumatic and unnecessary legal process, and can potentially risk their health and safety. With abortion access increasingly restricted across the country and 1 in 5 abortion patients now traveling long distances to obtain care,<sup>5</sup> Massachusetts has an opportunity to strengthen access for all, including minors.

By passing this legislation, Massachusetts can eliminate medically-unnecessary barriers, promote the bodily autonomy of young people, and ensure that all patients receive the compassionate, timely care they deserve. For these reasons, we urge the committee to act favorably on S.1579. Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

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<sup>1</sup> Janiak, Elizabeth ScD; Fulcher, Isabel R. PhD; Cottrill, Alischer A. BA; Tantoco, Nicole MD, MPH; Mason, Ashley H. MA; Fortin, Jennifer MPH; Sabino, Jamie JD; Goldberg, Alisa B. MD, MPH. Massachusetts' Parental Consent Law and Procedural Timing Among Adolescents Undergoing Abortion. *Obstetrics & Gynecology* 133(5):p 978-986, May 2019. | DOI: 10.1097/AOG.0000000000003190

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> Guttmacher Institute. *The High Toll of US Abortion Bans: Nearly One in Five Patients Now Traveling Out of State for Abortion Care*. <https://www.guttmacher.org/2023/12/high-toll-us-abortion-bans-nearly-one-five-patients-now-traveling-out-state-abortion-care>.