

Columns » Guest Writer

# Stand up for abortion rights

by [Stephanie Ho](#)

October 04, 2018



3 comments



Earlier this year, I faced one of the hardest moments in my medical career. It had nothing to do with a challenging treatment or an unfamiliar case. In fact, it had nothing to do with my profession — and everything to do with politics.

I had to turn away patients in need and let them know that Arkansas had effectively banned their chosen health care. Politicians, figuring they know more than medical experts, passed a restriction requiring abortion providers to contract with a back-up doctor. On the surface, politicians said this would make women safer. In practice, abortion is already incredibly safe. Having an abortion is safer than having your wisdom teeth pulled, it's safer than a colonoscopy, it's safer, in fact, than having a baby. Attempts

to recruit a back-up doctor proved unsuccessful, so medication abortion providers had to halt services.

Patients who had planned to come to our health center for a very safe, routine medical procedure instead faced agonizing decisions about leaving the state for their care or getting a surgical abortion at what was then the state's only abortion provider. I helped counsel patients about their options — but I couldn't provide the care I'm trained and qualified to offer. It was devastating, personally and professionally.

After about three weeks, the court recognized the burden on Arkansans and issued an injunction, which allowed us to resume services.

We disagree with the very premise of these restrictions — and we're continuing to challenge them in federal court. At the same time, we know how important

it is that we make every effort to comply so that we can continue providing abortion services in Arkansas. We walk a tightrope, more aware than ever before about what is at stake if we lose this fight, and unwavering in our commitment to patient care.

If months of public debate about the future of the Supreme Court and *Roe v. Wade* have left you feeling powerless, or if you're resigned to the idea that Arkansas is bound to ban abortion entirely, I implore you to speak up.

Though we've reached out to every OB/GYN in the state about the possibility of signing on as a back-up doctor, not a single person has been willing. Nonetheless, our efforts to recruit a doctor continue. I'm certain that many doctors in the state oppose abortion. But I think at least as many doctors support reproductive rights and believe women in Arkansas should have access to a full range of health care options — but they worry about how their patients, colleagues and communities might respond if they contract with Planned Parenthood.

Abortion access will not improve in Arkansas if we don't fight for it. Abortion stigma isn't going away if we don't open up conversations about how common and safe it is, and the important role it plays in reproductive health care. I believe we should trust each woman to know if and when continuing a pregnancy is the right decision for her. If you agree, don't keep it to yourself. Now, more than ever before, we need to stand strong in support of access to sexual and reproductive health care in Arkansas.

If you're a physician interested in helping Planned Parenthood comply with the contracted physician requirement, please contact us at [AR.Doctor@ppgreatplains.org](mailto:AR.Doctor@ppgreatplains.org) to learn more.

*Dr. Stephanie Ho is a director of primary care with Planned Parenthood Great Plains.*

## Tags

GUEST WRITER

## Comments (3)

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Oldest



**MYTWOSCENTS**

10/04/2018 AT 1:04 PM

3  
LIKES

3  
DISLIKES

Again, it's the old white men (I am one, not disagree with my group!) keeping women from having control of their own bodies. While the Republicans don't want the government in control of anything per their statements, it is this issue that on which they hang their hat! They want the babies born, but at that point their support comes to a sudden and complete stop. Meanwhile, they are all about the death penalty. I, again, being an old white man, will never have to make the choice of having an abortion. As the eighth child and last in my family while my parents should have been preparing for retirement I came along and am the poster child for allowing abortions! Even as a youngster I felt sad and empathy for my aging parents having to raise yet another with meager means in which to do so.

REPORT



LIKE



DISLIKE



**GROWN ZYGOTE**

10/05/2018 AT 12:22 PM

2  
LIKES

5  
DISLIKES

"Though we've reached out to every OB/GYN in the state about the possibility of signing on as a back-up doctor, not a single person has been willing."

The reason no physicians will sign your covenant with death is because it's a covenant with death. Good for them.

Abortion is a violent, bloody, monstrous crime against humanity. It is profoundly evil. Yet God can forgive even this, Dr. Ho.

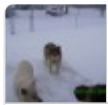
REPORT



LIKE



DISLIKE



**STEVEN E**

10/09/2018 AT 5:26 PM

1  
LIKES

3  
DISLIKES

Imagine that, someone who is invested in the death and murder industry wants to protect her concession to the ritual slaughter of infants in the womb.

Ho doesn't care, she gets payola off of it. A true daughter of Mengele.

REPORT

 LIKE

 DISLIKE

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