

I'm Grace Ferguson, an obstetrician- gynecologist in Pittsburgh. Today I would like to encourage everyone here to support moves to repeal the Hyde Amendment.

My daily work is to care of the low-income women of Pittsburgh, though through call and other venues end up working with women from the full range of socio-economic means. One of my driving principles as a doctor is that every woman has her own story, and that respect for individuality is the best way to provide quality healthcare.

When we talk about the impact of the Hyde Amendment in the day-to-day care offered to women, we are talking about the imposition of government values in the middle of the doctor patient relationship. Because of the Hyde Amendment, my patients do not have equal access to medical care. When talking to women about their most personal moments, I need to stop and check their insurance status so that I can realistically counsel them about the options they have available. They forgot to teach that lesson in medical school- above all else, what kind of insurance do they have?

The impact of this differential insurance coverage changes women's lives. It creates delay and obstacle as women who don't have coverage struggle spend weeks trying to come up with hundreds to thousands of dollars- and reproductive health is a place where delay has serious repercussions. When we listen to our patients, 58% of them would have preferred to have their procedure earlier and as their doctors, all of us would want their care to be as early and safe as possible. It is **unacceptable** that my low income patients are forced to undergo greater surgical risk because they have the additional obstacle of paying out of pocket.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to me today. I am optimistic that we will all do our best to ensure equal opportunity to healthcare for American women.