

February 23, 2021

Rep. Kelly Morrison
429 State Office Building
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd
St. Paul, MN 55155



Dear Representative Morrison:

The Minnesota Section of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) is writing in support of H.F. 1026 which would amend current mandatory reporting of laws of controlled substance use after prenatal screenings. This legislation will eliminate barriers to accessing prenatal care and improve access to addiction services.

Currently Minnesota has some of the most penalizing statutes in the country regarding mandatory reporting of pregnant women who are suffering from substance abuse. These reporting policies that deter women from seeking prenatal care are contrary to the welfare of the mother and fetus. Substance use reporting during pregnancy dissuades women from seeking prenatal care and may unjustly single out the most vulnerable, particularly women with low incomes and women of color.

ACOG is the premier professional membership organization dedicated to the improvement of women's health. As such, we support legislation that helps identify and address threats to the health and well-being of women. Our organization works with physicians, policy makers, legislators, and advocacy groups to change punitive laws and identify and implement evidence-based strategies outside the legal system to address the needs of women with addictions. These approaches should include the development of safe, affordable, available, efficacious, and comprehensive alcohol and drug treatment services for all women, especially pregnant women, and their families.

Studies indicate that prenatal care greatly reduces the negative effects of substance abuse during pregnancy, including decreased risks of low birth weight and prematurity. We know that women who use drugs are already likely to receive little to no prenatal care. By continuing this punitive policy of mandatory reporting, we are further limiting access when individuals may need it most.

Thank you for authoring this important legislation. If you have any questions, please reach out to our contract lobbyist, Tara Erickson, at Tara@tgeconsultingmn.com.

Sincerely,

Siri Fiebiger, MD
Legislative Chair
Minnesota ACOG