

March 21, 2022

Sen. Rosen
2113 Minnesota Senate Bldg.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Rep. Morrison
507 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155



Dear Sen. Rosen and Rep. Morrison:

The Minnesota Section of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) is writing to thank you for your commitment to maternal and infant health by standardizing the process of mandatory reporting laws. A uniform set of guidelines will help Minnesota's most vulnerable mothers, provide the care and treatment they need and keep families together.

Last session, changes were made to mandatory reporting laws regarding the use of controlled substances during pregnancy and prenatal screening. The changes allowed provider discretion as long as the woman was continuing prenatal care and working with her provider on her care plan. Proponents such as provider associations and women's advocacy groups were thrilled to make some changes that generally help a healthcare provider build trust with their patient which leads to improved outcomes for both moms and babies. However, those changes didn't eliminate these complications and families are still being impacted by these practices. Hospitals and health systems interrupted the changes differently and are confusing for providers of the mom and the baby.

We believe the task force created in HF4146/SF4046 to develop uniform guidelines for when both moms and babies are tested and reported will alleviate the confusion providers are seeing within our communities. Despite the best of intention, laws that instantly penalize pregnant women have negative consequences because they tend to prevent women from seeking prenatal care and other beneficial health care services during pregnancy. Studies indicate that prenatal care greatly reduces the negative effects of substance abuse during pregnancy, including decreased risks of low birth weight and prematurity.

A task force of health care professionals, practitioners, social service representatives, law enforcement, substance use disorder providers and community members with experience in this area can streamline guidelines and should produce recommendations for our state that lead to better health outcomes. Ultimately, we strive for health policy based on evidence-based protocols that reduce disparities and keep children safe but with their families.

We are eager for this important legislation to pass so the taskforce can create a pathway that gives providers more opportunity to help pregnant women in need without the fear of losing their children because of the disease of addiction.

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