

Read

A “Shield Law” for Lawyers: California Now Protects its Attorneys from Punishment for Reproductive and Gender-Affirming Care Work Banned Elsewhere

by Lara Stemple, Assistant Dean for Graduate Studies and International Programs and Senior Scholar with the Center on Reproductive Health, Law, and Policy at UCLA Law

Many states that ban or restrict abortion also target those helping others access abortion care, including attorneys. For example, in a letter to the law firm Sidley Austin, members of the Texas state legislature threatened felony criminal prosecution and disbarment for attorneys facilitating abortion both inside and outside of Texas.

At the same time, states seeking to protect health care access have instituted [“shield laws”](#) designed to protect patients, health care providers, and helpers from the reach of states that impose civil, criminal, and professional consequences related to reproductive and gender-affirming healthcare. Many of these shield laws protect health care providers from losing their home state license or being subject to professional discipline if another state tries to punish them. But such provisions do not always explicitly protect other types of licensed professionals.

Against this backdrop, Assemblymember Rick Zbur introduced AB 1525, which adds attorneys to the list of those shielded by California, and Governor Gavin Newsom recently [signed it into law](#). Until now, the state of California mandated that a California-licensed attorney charged, convicted, or disciplined for an offense in another state report that state’s action to the California State Bar. This would then trigger an automatic disciplinary hearing for the attorney in California. No longer. Thanks to AB 1525, work on abortion, reproductive health more broadly, gender-affirming care, and other “sensitive services” are excluded from California’s reporting and reciprocal discipline requirements.

Now, California lawyers (as well as applicants to the Bar) who have provided legal counsel related to these areas in a state that seeks to sanction such work need not fear professional consequences in California. This helps counter draconian anti-abortion laws aimed to create alarm and orchestrate overly broad compliance among professionals like doctors, nurses, and lawyers. The chilling effect created by such laws can cause those who have invested a great deal in their careers to fear practicing in ways that prioritize the needs of their patients, the rights of their clients, or their ethical duties. Just as earlier shield laws have done for healthcare providers, AB 1525 aims to provide California attorneys the confidence and the freedom to pursue this important work across the country.

In addition to the leadership of Assemblymember Zbur, UCLA Law’s Center on Reproductive Health, Law, and Policy provided technical advice and organized convenings. The Women Lawyers Association of Los Angeles (WLALA) and its board member Ariella Thal Simonds played a leading role, as did Laurie Taylor, together with former law students Jenna Karvunidis, Christy Thomas, and I’niah Clark. Ms. Clark, now an attorney, plans to advocate for similar legislation in her state of Oregon, and a similar bill was recently passed in Massachusetts, adding to the ever-growing slate of [shield laws across the country](#). Leaders within the bar associations of San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Beverly Hills also supported this effort, and the bill was formally co-sponsored by WLALA, Planned Parenthood Affiliates of California, and Equality California.



CRHLP is now welcoming applications for spring law student externs. Part-time student externs will have the opportunity to contribute to our policy and legal research and analysis as well as our empirical research that supports legal and policy change. Projects may include topics such as the reproductive rights of minors, constitutional protections for maternal health, protecting access to mifepristone, and more. As available, externs will also have the opportunity to participate in convenings and meetings with advocates, scholars, health care providers, researchers, and community members in the field. This position is available to 2L, 3L, and LLM students at UCLA Law. Learn more [here](#). Please submit a resume, cover letter, and legal writing sample to apply. Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis through November 17, 2025. Interested students should submit applications to Sofia Espinoza at espinoza.crhlp@law.ucla.edu.

Events

UNA FUERZA MÁS DE CIEN MIL

CELEBRATING LGBTQ LATINAS
IN LOS ANGELES

COCKTAILS • TACOS • RESEARCH • IMPACT

Featuring music by DJ KeeLez

WEDNESDAY
OCT 15

6:00 - 8:00 PM BAR FLORES
1542 SUNSET BLVD, LOS ANGELES

Join us for the launch of two groundbreaking reports on LGBTQ Latinas in Los Angeles and discover how the findings can inspire activism, art, community, and change.

HOSTED BY



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Williams Institute



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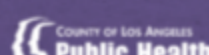
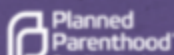
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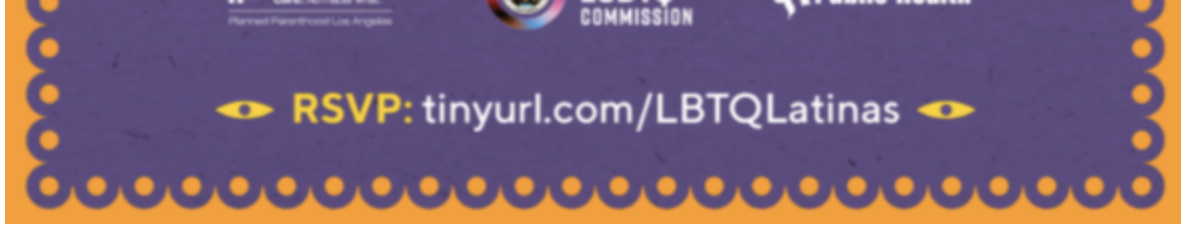


CALIFORNIA
LATINAS FOR
REPRODUCTIVE
JUSTICE



UCLA School of Law
Center on Reproductive Health,
Law, and Policy



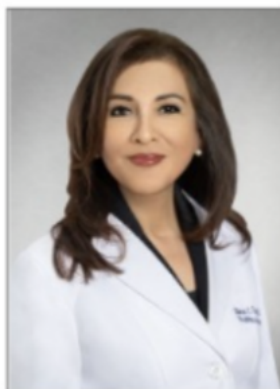


Join us at Bar Flores on October 15, 2025, at 6pm PT for a celebration of LBTQ Latinas in Los Angeles County we are co-hosting. The evening will highlight two groundbreaking reports from Latinas Futures 2050 Lab, the TransLatin@ Coalition, and the Williams Institute, and explore how the findings can strengthen activism, art, and community for LBTQ Latinas across the county. This event is generously supported by Latinas Futures 2050 Lab, Margarita Gandia, and Anthony Pritzker Family Foundation. Cocktails, tacos, and music will be provided. RSVP here: tinyurl.com/LBTQLatinas.

**UCLA Center for Reproductive Science, Health and Education (CRSHE)
Distinguished Speaker Series**

featuring

Diana E. Ramos



Appointed by Governor Gavin Newsom, California Surgeon General, Dr. Ramos will join us for an extraordinary public conversation on advancing the health and wellbeing of Californians through policies that promote reproductive, maternal and child health.



Monday, October 20, 2025
4:00 p.m. PT

[California NanoSystems Institute \(CNSI\)](#)
UCLA Campus

[CLICK TO RSVP](#)

*Registration is required.
Seating is first come, first served and is not guaranteed.*

About the speaker: Dr. Diana E. Ramos, was appointed Surgeon General of California in 2022. She is a visionary public health leader dedicated to advancing the wellbeing of all communities. Dr. Ramos champions efforts to address reproductive and maternal health outcomes, adverse childhood experiences, and mental health, shaping policies that leave a lasting impact across the state. As an alumna of UCLA's Fielding School of Public Health with more than three decades as an Obstetrician Gynecologist, Dr. Ramos has also held leadership roles at the local, state, and national levels. A recipient of the Latino Spirit Award and the Public Health Leadership Award, she is a powerful voice for health equity.

Ramos will join us for an extraordinary public conversation on advancing the health and wellbeing of Californians through policies that promote reproductive, maternal and child health. The event is part of the UCLA Center for Reproductive Science, Health and Education (CRSHE)'s Distinguished Speaker Series.

RSVP [here](#).

In the News

CRHLP Legal and Policy Director Diana Kasdan is featured in a new Bloomberg Law article examining escalating interstate conflicts over abortion care and shield laws.

States like Texas and Louisiana, with near-total abortion bans, are asking courts to prohibit states like California and New York from enforcing their shield laws enacted to help increase access to abortion care. As Diana explains, California's shield law "explicitly protects in-state caregivers who provide care that's legal there regardless of the patient's location."

And, as CRHLP Affiliated Faculty, Professor Lindsey Wiley argues in [an article](#) published in State Court Report, precedent supports the authority of shield state courts to reject attempts by states, like Texas, to enforce their abortion ban policies beyond their borders. With litigation pending in federal and multiple state courts, constitutional scholars predict the United States Supreme Court will ultimately weigh in on whether shield law states must cooperate with or enforce judgments under the laws of a ban state. To learn more about shield laws, visit our Shield Law State Guide [here](#) and read the full Bloomberg Law article [here](#).

Policy News

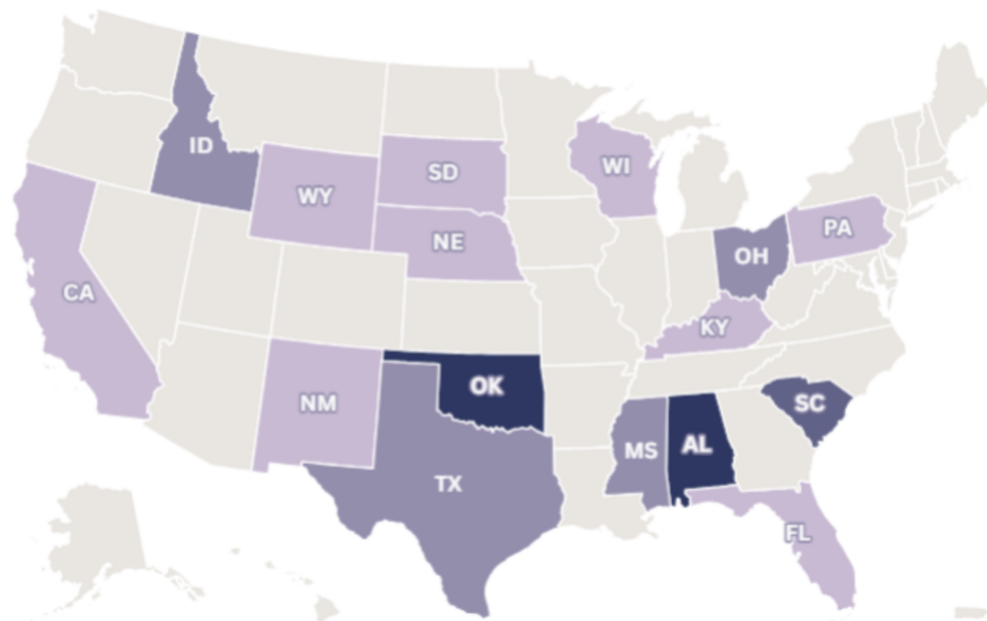


Photo Credit: Erin Hooley/Chicago Tribune/Getty Images

The Food and Drug Administration [has approved](#) a second generic version of mifepristone, the first-line medication used in most U.S. abortions. The newly approved drug, produced by Evita Solutions, is authorized for use through 10 weeks of pregnancy and is expected to launch in January 2026. Approval of the generic, typically a routine regulatory process, prompted backlash from anti-abortion groups and Republican lawmakers, who have been aggressively pushing the FDA to reconsider its approval of medication abortion, and issue new rules to severely restrict its availability. Those efforts have been ramping up, despite the fact that mifepristone in combination with misoprostol, was first approved for medication abortion decades ago, in 2000, and has

[repeatedly been found](#) safe and effective. To learn more about efforts to protect or restrict access to mifepristone, use our Mifepristone Litigation and Federal Action Tracker.

Cases by State



Source: [U.S. Census Bureau 2021 boundaries](#)

*A Flourish map

Photo credit: Pregnancy Justice

A new report from Pregnancy Justice [finds](#) that more than 400 people were charged with [pregnancy-related crimes](#) in the two years following the Supreme Court's decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*. The analysis, part of the multi-year Pregnancy Prosecutions Tracking Study, identified 412 prosecutions across 16 states between June 2022 and June 2024, with the highest numbers in Alabama (192) and Oklahoma (112). Most cases involved allegations of substance use during pregnancy and were charged under child abuse or neglect statutes. Nine cases included abortion-related allegations, and nearly three dozen involved miscarriage or stillbirth. More than three-quarters of defendants were low-income, and in two-thirds of cases, prosecutors obtained information from health care providers. The report warns that these prosecutions often criminalize pregnancy outcomes, deter people from seeking care, and deepen racial and economic inequities in maternal health.

Legal News



Photo credit:Saul Loeb/Getty

The Missouri Attorney General has subpoenaed medical records and internal documents from Planned Parenthood clinics in Kansas City and St. Louis as part of the state's defense of abortion restrictions that remain in place despite last year's voter-approved constitutional amendment protecting abortion rights. The subpoenas seek patient records, adverse event reports, and clinic protocols, which Planned Parenthood and the ACLU of Missouri called an attempt to harass and a violation of patient privacy. The subpoenas were issued in response to litigation under the new [Reproductive Freedom Amendment](#) challenging the constitutionality of Missouri's multiple abortion bans and restrictions, many of which are temporarily blocked while the case proceeds to trial in January. The move follows efforts by the attorney general's office to obtain patient records from the Washington University Transgender Center, drawing concern that the state is expanding its use of subpoenas to target reproductive and gender-affirming health care providers.



Photo credit: Montinique Monroe/Getty Images

The Texas Attorney General announced the arrests of eight people allegedly connected to a Houston licensed midwife who was charged earlier this year with performing unlawful abortions and practicing medicine without a license at Clínicas Latinoamericanas, a group of low-cost clinics serving northwest Houston's Spanish-speaking community. The newly arrested individuals are accused of working with the unlicensed midwife and practicing medicine without a license. Abortion rights groups have condemned the arrests as an intimidation tactic reflecting a broader pattern of abortion-related investigations initiated by third-party reports that are not based on or addressing any evidence of harm.

Food for Thought



With so much going on in the world of reproductive health, law, and policy, every week we'll share articles, books, and media you might have missed.

[ICE Fears Put Pregnant Immigrants And Their Babies At Risk](#)

['Carrying Fear' While Carrying A Baby: Pregnant Californians Deserve More Maternity Options](#)

[One Woman's Quest To Reclaim The Ugly History Of Black Maternal Health](#)

[Flock Safety And Texas Sheriff Claimed License Plate Search Was For A Missing Person. It Was An Abortion Investigation.](#)



Reimagining the future of reproductive health, law, and policy.

UCLA Center on Reproductive Health, Law, and Policy is a think tank and research center created to develop long-term, lasting solutions that advance all aspects of reproductive justice, and address the current national crisis of abortion access.

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