

Senate Republicans Attack Women's Health Across Wisconsin

Written by Democratic Party of Wisconsin, Melanie Conklin
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GOP ideological attack on the UW and women's health care may hurt most in rural areas where there are already few OB-GYNs. Anti-choice extremist U.S. Senate candidate Leah Vukmir is a sponsor.

MADISON -- The Wisconsin Senate Health and Human Services Committee is voting today on SB 154/AB 206, a bill that would do even further damage to women's health care in Wisconsin by worsening the already troubling shortage of OB-GYNs. In Wisconsin, a shocking 20 counties do not have an OB-GYN, according to the American Medical Society.

With this bill, Republicans have shown their dangerous willingness to damage not only women's health, but also Wisconsin's strong and proud tradition of higher education and a UW System that is a key economic engine and contributor to our state's economy, job creation and world-class reputation.

"Republicans, in an effort to promote themselves, are willing to ignore that their actions will cause real-life harm to Wisconsin women who need health care, including prenatal care, annual preventative physicals, cancer screenings and other vital health care provided by OB-GYNs," said **Martha Laning**, Democratic Party of Wisconsin chair. "Damaging women's health, particularly in areas already underserved across our state, goes against our Wisconsin values."



Republican opportunism surrounding this bill is embodied by the chair of the Health and Human Services Committee, far-right state Sen. **Leah Vukmir**, who is using this extremist, anti-choice legislation to advance her political career and boost her national profile, even as it limits and weakens Wisconsin women's access to reproductive health care.

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Current law already prohibits the use of state and federal funds for abortions, but Republicans' latest far-right proposal takes things an extreme step further, preventing University of Wisconsin System physicians from providing or assisting in abortion services -- even at privately funded facilities and on their own time. Vukmir is [a well-established anti-choice extremist](#) who has previously backed a zero-exception abortion ban and even right-wing "personhood" measures that stand to ban common forms of birth control.

In practice, the dangerous legislation would "destroy" the UW School of Medicine's ob-gyn program, [according to UW School of Medicine and Public Health Dean Robert Golden](#), who predicts the bill could harm the medical school's ability to provide "well-trained ob-gyns just when our state needs them the most to save the lives of women."

Testifying earlier this summer on behalf of the Wisconsin Academy of Family Physicians, retired Dr. Calvin Bruce, summed up harm that will be done to Wisconsin women by AB 206 this way: "Our academy is neither pro-choice nor pro-life. We have members who have strongly held beliefs on both sides of that issue. We are strongly pro-patient. And we strongly oppose AB206 on workforce, medical and academic grounds."