

RESOLUTION NUMBER: C- 02

REFERRED TO: Reference Committee on Public and Occupational Health

SUBJECT: Abortion as an Essential Component of Health Care

SUBMITTED BY: Dawn Bingham, MD, MPH, FACOG and Tricia Seal, MD, FACOG

1 **WHEREAS;** physicians have a professional and ethical obligation to act in the best interest
2 of their patients by following evidence-based practices; and

3 **WHEREAS;** the physician-patient relationship relies on a physician’s ability to use their
4 medical judgment and expertise as to the information or treatment that is in the best interest of a
5 patient; and

6 **WHEREAS;** the South Carolina Medical Association takes all reasonable and necessary
7 steps to ensure that its members can exercise medical decision-making and treatment in good faith,
8 and in concert with informed consent and patient autonomy; and

9 **WHEREAS;** South Carolina state laws should support physicians for practicing within the
10 accepted standard of medical care and within the scope of training for their specialty, and with
11 respect to their subject matter authority and expertise; and

12 **WHEREAS;** Abortion is a common, safe medical intervention that improves the lives,
13 health, and well-being of those who need it; and

14 **WHEREAS;** Roughly one-quarter of women in the United States access abortion care in
15 their lifetime; and

16 **WHEREAS;** Many factors influence or necessitate a patient’s decision to have an abortion
17 including, but not limited to, contraceptive failure, barriers to contraceptive use and access, rape,
18 incest, intimate partner violence, fetal anomalies, illness during pregnancy, health co-morbidities
19 that can be exacerbated by pregnancy, cancer, and exposure to teratogenic medications; and

20 **WHEREAS;** Pregnancy complications, including placental abruption, premature rupture
21 of membranes, ectopic pregnancies, bleeding from placenta previa, preeclampsia or eclampsia,

22 and cardiac, pulmonary, or renal conditions may be so severe that abortion is the only measure to
23 preserve a patient’s optimal health or save her life; and

24 **WHEREAS;** Over 75 national medical organizations, including the American Medical
25 Association, affirmed in consensus statement in July 2022 that abortion is an essential part of
26 healthcare; and

27 **WHEREAS;** The practice of medicine is centered around patient autonomy. Patients have
28 an established right to take into account their own personal calculus of the risks and benefits of
29 any clinical situation, option, treatment, and the right to make decisions that are in their own
30 personal interest regarding their own health and welfare; and

31 **WHEREAS;** Intentional **barriers to care such as abortion bans violate** long-established
32 and widely accepted medical ethical principles of beneficence, nonmaleficence, and respect for
33 patient autonomy; and

34 **WHEREAS;** South Carolina has one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the country,
35 ranking 42nd out of 50; and

36 **WHEREAS;** the maternal mortality rate in is 3x higher in South Carolina for women of
37 color; and

38 **WHEREAS;** Pregnancy is not a benign condition, and abortion bans jeopardize patient
39 safety and well-being; and

40 **WHEREAS;** It is critical for clinicians to be able to use and rely upon their expertise and
41 medical judgment to determine the treatments indicated for each clinical situation and evolving
42 level of care; and

43 **WHEREAS;** The right of conscience to provide standard of care medical options and care
44 within the full scope of a physician's training and professional judgment is an inviolable tenet of
45 the physician-patient relationship; and

46 **WHEREAS;** government or other third parties that seek to restrict a physician's ability to
47 use their professional medical judgment as to the treatment that is in the best interest of a patient

48 compromise the trusted nature of the physician-patient relationship; and diminish patient safety
49 and autonomy; now, therefore, be it

50 **RESOLVED;** that the South Carolina Medical Association affirms that there is broad
51 medical consensus from over 75 national medical organizations, including the American Medical
52 Association, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the American Academy of
53 Family Physicians, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Public Health Association,
54 and the American Board of Surgery that abortion in an essential component of reproductive
55 healthcare; and

56 **RESOLVED;** that the South Carolina Medical Association affirms that interference in
57 evidence-based medical care compromises the sanctity of the physician-patient relationship and
58 undermines the provision of quality health care; and be it further

59 **RESOLVED;** that the South Carolina Medical Association affirms the value and need for
60 access to abortion as an evidence-based medical care option, as established by nationally accepted
61 standards of care according to nationally recognized professional practice guidelines, and within
62 the full scope of a physician's training and professional judgment.

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