



THE AMERICAN CONGRESS
OF OBSTETRICIANS
AND GYNECOLOGISTS

Office of the President

Mark S. DeFrancesco, MD, MBA, FACOG

March 1, 2016

The Honorable Marsha Blackburn
Chair, Select Investigative Panel of the Committee
on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Janice Schakowsky
Ranking Member, Select Investigative Panel
of the Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Blackburn and Schakowsky:

On behalf of the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), representing more than 57,000 physicians and partners in women's health, I am writing today to in support of women's access to comprehensive health care, including reproductive care, and in support of the continued use of fetal tissue for medical research.

As women's health care physicians, we recognize that safe, legal abortion is a necessary component of women's health care. Where abortion is legal, it is extremely safe. In contrast, where abortion is illegal or highly restricted, women resort to unsafe means, including self-inflicted abdominal and bodily trauma, ingestion of dangerous chemicals, self-medication with a variety of drugs, and reliance on unqualified providers.¹

We urge the Panel members to focus on important, even urgent, measures that must be taken to protect women and infants, including strengthening the U.S. public health response to the Zika virus, an emergent public health threat.

Fetal tissue research has been credited for propelling scientific understanding of diseases such as polio, hepatitis A and measles. Given what we know thus far about exposure to the Zika virus during pregnancy and the potential link to birth defects, fetal tissue research may play a fundamental role in the development of a vaccine.

We urge Panel members, and the full Congress, to work together on meaningful ways to improve women's health care.

Sincerely,

Mark S. DeFrancesco, MD, MBA, FACOG
President

¹ Increasing access to abortion. Committee Opinion No. 613. American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. *Obstet Gynecol* 2014;124:1060-5.