

Protecting Patients from Unnecessary, Invasive Pelvic Exams

[HB 2475](#) - [Rep. Bosley](#) (D-79, St. Louis) | [HB 2617](#) - [Rep. Carpenter](#) (D-15, Kansas City)
[HB 2713](#) - [Rep. Quade](#) (D-132, Springfield) | [SB 1041](#) - [Sen. Schupp](#) (D-24, St. Louis)

The state government undermining Missourians' reproductive freedom by forcing abortion patients to have medically unnecessary pelvic exams – it is state-sanctioned sexual assault.

- Pelvic exams are invasive and can be uncomfortable. They require a physician to insert a speculum into a patient's vagina to examine their cervix, and to insert fingers into the patient's vagina to feel reproductive organs.
- Forcing a patient to have a pelvic exam when it's not necessary – especially if the patient is very young or has experienced sexual assault or abuse – can be traumatizing.
- Last year, the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) moved the goalposts, arbitrarily changing how they apply a regulation and forcing patients to have a medically unnecessary pelvic exam three days before they can have an abortion.

Leading experts agree: Patients deserve high-quality health care informed by best practices and medical evidence – not medically unnecessary regulations imposed by politicians.

- As a health care provider, Planned Parenthood's top priority is providing high-quality health care. This does not include forcing patients to have an invasive pelvic exam when it is completely medically unnecessary.
- According to the [American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists \(ACOG\)](#), "While pelvic exams may be appropriate for patients with certain conditions, routine multiple pelvic exams for women seeking abortion care are unwarranted, invasive, and not supported by evidence."
- ACOG opposes this rule because it ["force\[s\] physicians to practice outside the bounds of evidence-based medicine."](#)

Government-mandated pelvic exams disrespect patients and providers.

- "It is unacceptable that lawmakers and bureaucrats are attempting to dictate how doctors practice medicine without regard to medical science and are treating them like criminals... Shared decision-making in health care should be between a patient and her physician - not government bureaucrats." - [ACOG](#)



Planned Parenthood Advocates in Missouri

Let's be clear: This rule is part of a larger, coordinated attack to end safe, legal abortion in Missouri.

- Thanks to another medically unnecessary law – Missouri's mandatory 72-hour delay – DHSS' rule forces a pelvic exam three days before an abortion. Because organs shift, the pelvic exam provides no useful medical information at this point.
- After physicians spoke out against this unethical rule and refused to comply, DHSS partially backed off and issued an emergency rule allowing a physician to "waive" the requirement to perform a pelvic exam three days before an in-clinic abortion, and instead only require it at the time of the abortion
- This "waiver" still forces patients to have a medically unnecessary pelvic exam if they choose a medication abortion, which is not an invasive procedure – it requires only swallowing a series of pills. There is no medical reason for a patient to have a pelvic exam if they have a medication abortion.

Lawmakers can fix this right now by passing legislation ensuring that health care providers can follow evidence-based best practices – not bureaucrats or politicians.