



ASSOCIATION OF MATERNAL & CHILD HEALTH PROGRAMS

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## **SCOTUS Misses Opportunity to Affirm EMTALA's Protections, Leaving Pregnant Patients in Uncertainty**

Washington, D.C. – *Today, AMCHP's Chief of Policy and Government Affairs, Sherie Lou Santos, issued the following statement in response to the decision by the Supreme Court of the United States, in the consolidated cases of Idaho v. United States and Moyle v. United States:*

"Today, the U.S. Supreme Court dismissed these cases as 'improvidently granted' – meaning the Court determined the district court should render a decision before higher courts weigh in. Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson wrote that she is disappointed the Court did not decide this case on the facts, writing 'Today's decision is not a victory for pregnant patients in Idaho...[P]regnant people experiencing emergency medical conditions remain in a precarious position, as their doctors are kept in the dark about what the law requires.'

This decision reinstates the district court's order, temporarily preventing Idaho from enforcing its abortion ban in instances where emergency room providers conclude that the termination of a pregnancy is needed to prevent serious harm to a woman's health. However, Idaho's near-total abortion ban, even when medically necessary, continues to put patients and providers in a precarious situation due to the lack of formal guidance for determining a medical emergency and severe penalties for violating the law.

The 1986 Emergency Medical Treatment & Active Labor Act (EMTALA) ended the practice of turning patients away or sending them to other facilities when needing emergency care, including abortion. While the Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs (AMCHP) is relieved that, for now, patients in Idaho can receive care under federal EMTALA law, the Court missed an opportunity to affirm that EMTALA's protections override state abortion bans. As litigation and attacks on reproductive healthcare access persist, pregnant patients in states with similar abortion bans will continue to be denied urgent and life-saving medical care.

AMCHP recognizes the importance of EMTALA as it guarantees the undeniable right to essential health care and medical intervention and ensures access to life-saving care for anyone in an emergency, regardless of their ability to pay, their immigration status, whether they suffer from a mental health or substance use disorder, or whether they are medically determined to need an abortion. AMCHP remains steadfast in continuing to support reproductive healthcare access and the right to medical intervention to save lives."

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The Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs (AMCHP) is a national resource, partner, and advocate for state public health leaders who work and support state maternal and child health programs and others working to improve the health of women, children, youth, parents, families, and communities. AMCHP builds successful programs by disseminating best practices, advocating on behalf of our members in Washington, D.C., providing technical assistance, convening leaders to share experiences and ideas, and advising states to reach our common goal of healthy children, healthy families, and healthy communities. For more information, visit [www.amchp.org](http://www.amchp.org) and follow AMCHP on [LinkedIn](#), [X \(Twitter\)](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Threads](#).