

In Florida, we could all soon be Kate Cox



Your Turn

Fran Sachs
Guest columnist

As I read more and more about the latest restrictions on reproductive health across the country, I feel like finding Kate Cox, the Texas woman who recently tried so desperately to safely and legally end her pregnancy with her local doctor due to a horrific fetal anomaly. I want to give her a hug.

Seventeen years ago, I was Kate Cox.

I was pregnant with a much-wanted pregnancy. Like Kate, I learned from my doctor that my fetus suffered from Trisomy 13 and received a similar prognosis to Kate with her Trisomy 18 diagnosis. I would either miscarry very late in my pregnancy, which would cause me a raft of health dangers, or if I were able to deliver, the child would be terribly malformed and suffer immense pain throughout his or her short life span of typically two weeks.

Thankfully, unlike Kate, I was able to take the advice of my doctors and obtain a safe and legal abortion not far from my home in Palm Beach County, where I could be surrounded and supported by family and friends during this trying time.

My experience led me to become involved with EMA - Emergency Medical Assistance. EMA is a local non-profit that has been providing funding and support for people in Palm Beach County who are in need of abortion care but cannot afford it on their own. For seventeen years, I have witnessed the growth of this organization. EMA had to increase its capacity to support an ever expanding need for help, fueled by more stringent laws being passed in the State of Florida.

When I first started volunteering with EMA, we helped one to two people **per year** leave the state to obtain abortion care they could not obtain locally. With the restrictions that are currently in place, we now help three to four people **per week** leave the state. And EMA is now preparing to help four to five people **per day** travel out of state to obtain abortions as the six-week ban takes effect.

Kate had to leave her home state to get an abortion because of the government interference with access to reproductive health services in Texas.

We could all soon be Kate Cox.

On Monday, the Florida Supreme Court opened the floodgates to similar laws here. They broke 40 years of precedent by removing abortion protections previously guaranteed by the Florida Constitution, triggering a six-week abortion ban to take effect in 30 days. Despite widespread public outcry, the Court decided that Floridians have no right to medical privacy and that politicians can interfere in their personal medical decisions. Those seven individuals have decided that pregnant people in Florida don't deserve safe and effective health care.

Ironically, on the same day, the Supreme Court decided that Florida voters have the opportunity to finally put an end to government intrusion in our health care. A constitutional amendment to limit government interference with abortion will appear on the November ballot. We must do all we can to mobilize voters and get them ready to vote "Yes" on Amendment 4. This ballot measure, advanced by Floridians Protecting Freedom (a broad coalition of community organizations, health care providers, advocacy groups, faith leaders, and grassroots organizers), will limit government interference by politicians in our reproductive health decisions. It will protect abortion access.

Floridians want the freedom to make their own personal health care decisions. Every person's circumstances are different and every pregnancy is unique.

That's why, when it comes to individual people's personal medical decisions, one-size-fits-all laws don't work. Amendment 4 will ensure that decisions about pregnancy are between patients and their doctors — not politicians. Voting "Yes" on this amendment is a vote for the freedom to decide what is best for our own bodies and lives.

Until Amendment 4 passes, and even after, your support will remain critical. Please support your local Palm Beach County abortion fund, Emergency Medical Assistance (EMA) which recognizes that every Floridian deserves the freedom to access health care and make their own decisions about their lives, families, and futures.

Let's not become the next Kate Cox, and for sure let's not become Texas.

Fran Sachs is a board member of Emergency Medical Assistance. To find out more about Palm Beach County's local abortion fund, Emergency Medical Assistance, visit www.emaupb.org