

Dear Colleagues,

My name is Dr Caitlin Bernard and I have been an OBGYN in Indianapolis for the past nine years and I have been the Legislative Advocacy Co-Chair for the Indiana Section of the American College of Obstetricians & Gynecologists for the past seven years. I am now running for the position of Alternate Delegate to the American Medical Association from the ISMA. I was inspired to pursue this role because of the importance of physician advocacy for the public health of our country, which I believe needs to be brought back to the center of AMA advocacy.

One of the core goals of the development of the AMA was to enhance public health, and that goal feels more at risk now than at any other time during my career. While advancing the interests of physicians ourselves is certainly important, sometimes it feels like the AMA and other medical societies are hesitant to speak out on issues of public health and social justice for fear of losing political capital for other fights like physician reimbursement. Those issues are certainly important too, but if we do not use our strength now, we are at serious risk of losing credibility in the eyes of society and history. And if you have heard my name, you probably know I am not one to be hesitant to speak out.

Our public health is more at risk than ever due to political pressure at every level and on nearly every issue. The "One Big Beautiful Bill" means more of our patients are losing their health insurance and access to care at the same time as our labor & delivery units and even whole hospitals are closing, pushing that access even further out of reach. ICE raids mean our patients are afraid to leave their houses to come for care. As an OBGYN in Indianapolis I am seeing this firsthand as our Haitian and Latina patients are missing prenatal and postpartum care and fathers are being deported even as their wives are delivering their newborn babies who need their support. Public support for vaccines and other public health measures is at risk as politicians with no medical training are in charge of public health decisions and publicly assailing the evidence and guidelines we have worked so hard to compile over decades. Hard-fought environmental protections for clean air, water, and food are being rolled back, putting everyone at risk.

The AMA must be the united voice of physicians to fight back against these injustices and stand up for our patients. We are the ones who have worked so hard to bring about sound public health policies and advance public health over the past century, and we must be the ones to stand our ground now against further erosion. We are the ones who are witness to the devastation from these intrusions of politics into medicine every day in our offices and emergency rooms and hospitals, and we must be the ones to build it back even better for the future.

The only way to do that is to restore physician leadership in national health policy. We must be the ones to lead the necessary changes in our medical and health insurance system to ensure we can continue to provide evidence-based care for patients without the intrusion of corporate health insurance and private equity. We must be the ones creating public health policy at the local and national levels. The AMA needs to be the outspoken leader who is unafraid to fight for our patients, and I hope that I can be your representative to do so.

I thank you for your support, as so many of you have already given me over the past few years, and I hope to be able to count on your continued support in this new endeavor.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Caitlin Bernard". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Caitlin" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Bernard".

Caitlin Bernard, MD, MSCI, FACOG