# Society of Teachers of Family Medicine Opposes Texas Legislation That Undermines the Physician-Patient Relationship and Restrictions to Training

The Society of Teachers of Family Medicine is deeply concerned about the consequences of the Texas state law Senate Bill 8, which took effect September 1, 2021. These consequences include the effective banning of certain medical communication between a physician and patient, restricting clinical training of the full scope of women’s health care, encouraging rewards for citizens to file claims about suspicions of legal procedures and inspiring the replication of these laws in other states.

**Interferes with Physician-Patient Relationship**

STFM strongly opposes any laws and regulations that interfere in the confidential relationship between a patient and their physician. Patients must be able to depend on their physicians’ training, expertise and use of medical evidence to help them make critical decisions about their personal health. Physicians and health care professionals must be able to practice medicine freely and without threat of punishment, harassment, or retribution.

**Restricts Residency Education**

We are opposed to restrictions on our physicians and educators to teach and provide clinical training for the full scope of family medicine to our residents. Our opposition is consistent with our advocacy policy that Congress and/or federal agencies should not legislate or mandate restrictions on the educational content of training programs. Any such restrictions limit and/or adversely affect our educational mission. We reaffirm the right of each trainee to choose certain aspects of their training consistent with their belief systems. This policy informs our Board’s position on the Texas legislation.

**Restricts Access to Health Care**

This Texas law goes against our policies and beliefs in the value of having appropriate numbers of health care personnel to meet the health care needs of the population and to provide access to health care for all individuals. Abortion is part of full spectrum women's health care and physicians can use their own judgement as to whether to provide it.

**Rewards Vigilante Behavior**

Senate Bill 8 allows for a bounty that encourages citizens to file a cause of action, whether frivolous or provable, against physicians, other health care professionals, and anyone who ‘aids or abets’ an act of providing full spectrum health care. This raises concerns about access to health care for women and the wellbeing and safety of the physicians and health care professionals who provide care for them.

**Precedent Setting**

If permitted to proceed, this law will be precedent-setting and could normalize vigilante interference in the patient-physician relationship in other complex, controversial medical or ethical situations. Legislating the communication between patient and physician is not something we can allow to happen.

Patients and their physicians should be the ones to make medical decisions together about what care is best for them. This law obstructs that ability. We strongly urge the courts to act swiftly to strike down this law and any similar legislation.

*The STFM Board of Directors, represents more than 5,000 family medicine educators, including physicians, researchers, behavioral health professionals, pharmacists, nurses, physician assistants, residents, medical students, and others involved in family medicine education, with a mission to advance family medicine to improve health through a community of teachers and scholars.*