

Testimony of Talcott Camp before the House
Subcommittee on the Constitution and Limited Government
May 16, 2023

Chairman Johnson, Ranking Member Scanlon, and distinguished members of the subcommittee:

My name is Talcott Camp, and I am the Chief Legal and Strategy Officer of the National Abortion Federation, or NAF. I have worked to support providers of abortion care for decades, both in my previous role at the ACLU, and in my current role at NAF. NAF is the professional association of abortion providers; NAF's mission is to unite, represent, serve, and support abortion providers in delivering patient-centered, evidence-based care. Since 1977, NAF has compiled an invaluable database of statistics on anti-abortion extremist violence, allowing us to track patterns and trends. Last week, we released our 2022 violence and disruption statistics, a copy of which is attached to my written testimony.

Since 1977, there have been 11 murders, 26 attempted murders, 42 bombings, 200 arsons, 531 assaults, 492 clinic invasions, 375 burglaries, and thousands of other criminal incidents targeting abortion patients, abortion providers, and abortion volunteers. NAF's 2022 violence and disruption statistics show increases in major incidents. Comparing 2022 with 2021, the number of death threats or threats of harm rose from 182 to 218; stalkings rose 229% from 28 to 92; burglaries rose 231%; and four clinics suffered arsons. The statistics also show a sharp increase in violence and disruption in very specific states: The Supreme Court decision overturning *Roe* and the subsequent proliferation of state abortion bans emboldened anti-abortion extremists to travel specifically to states where abortion remains legal – to target clinics, clinicians, and patients there. We must stand against violence at clinics providing abortion care

in states where it remains legal, and recognize that a national abortion ban would be an even greater public health catastrophe.

No one should fear violence at the workplace or when seeking health care, yet abortion providers, patients, and volunteers face violence and harassment every day. Let me provide a few examples: In 2022, we saw a 100% increase in arsons compared to 2021. One of those arsons was at a clinic set to open in Casper, WY, in June 2022. But in May, shortly after reporting on the Supreme Court's expected decision in *Dobbs*, an arsonist broke into the clinic and set it on fire. The arson devastated staff, delayed the clinic's opening by nearly a year, and cost hundreds of thousands of dollars in repairs. A few months earlier, an anti-abortion extremist stood outside a NAF member clinic on the east coast with a flaming torch, holding a photo of one of the clinic's abortion providers including his full name, personal information, and the word "WANTED" printed on it. Through a megaphone, they shouted details about his family: his wife's name, how many children he had. They then posted a video of these threats on a public social media page, ensuring that their menacing message reached a wide audience.

The use of that "WANTED" poster was not singular or new. That extremist tactic harkens back to the terrifying circumstances surrounding Congress's enactment of the FACE Act – the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act – in 1994 with bipartisan support. For many years, anti-abortion extremists had used clinic blockades to intimidate and prevent access to abortion clinics; the first clinic arson was in 1976, followed by a series of bombings in 1978, and the attacks and threats escalated. In the 1990s, anti-abortion extremists began using butyric acid attacks and anthrax threat letters. In 1993, Dr. David Gunn was murdered outside his clinic – the first abortion provider killed by anti-abortion extremists. He too was featured on a "WANTED" style poster before his murder, as were other now-slain abortion providers. Since

Dr. Gunn's murder, there have been 10 more murders and 26 attempted murders, most recently in Colorado Springs in 2015.

It was in response to this escalating violence that Congress passed the bipartisan FACE Act, which has been an important tool in addressing extremist violence over the last three decades: every administration has enforced the FACE Act, Republican and Democratic alike. Nonetheless, abortion providers and their patients face unrelenting threats of violence and disruption to care. I am here today because no one should fear violence at their workplace, or when they are trying to access health care. For decades, abortion providers and their patients have faced escalating harassment and violence; in the post-*Dobbs* world, that atmosphere has only intensified, making the FACE Act and the protections it offers all the more critical.