



STATE OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

LETITIA JAMES
ATTORNEY GENERAL

DIVISION OF SOCIAL JUSTICE
HEALTH CARE BUREAU

June 28, 2022

VIA EMAIL & U.S. MAIL

Halimah DeLaine Prado
General Counsel
Google
1600 Amphitheatre Parkway
Mountain View, CA 94043

Dear Halimah DeLaine Prado,

I write on behalf of the Office of the Attorney General of New York (“OAG”) regarding misleading information that may be presented to your users through Google Maps, and ask for your assistance in rectifying this troubling situation.

As you may be aware, on Friday, the Supreme Court issued its opinion in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization*, which overturned the constitutional right to abortion enshrined in *Roe v. Wade*. As a result of this decision, abortion has already become unlawful in some states with abortion bans that pre-date *Roe* and in others with “trigger” bans that take effect immediately or almost immediately after the reversal of *Roe*.¹ In total, it is expected that just over half of the states will ban abortion, requiring pregnant patients to travel to those remaining states where abortion remains legal.² New York is one state where abortion will remain legal thanks to robust state protections in place for providing safe and legal abortions for all pregnant persons. It is estimated that, with no federal right to abortion, New York will see an increase of 11-13% of people who may drive to the state for an abortion.³ Given this, it is key to ensure that pregnant people have the ability to access the abortion care they need.

Presently it appears that Google Maps often fails to distinguish between facilities that offer abortion services and those that do not. A search through Google Maps seeking “abortion” and a location will provide a local listing of both those health care providers who offer abortion services and organizations that do not provide abortion care. Indeed, those latter organizations known as “crisis pregnancy centers” (CPCs) are not health care providers and will not provide abortion counseling or

¹ Elizabeth Nash & Lauren Cross, *26 States are Certain or Likely to Ban Abortion Without Roe: Here’s Which Ones and Why*, GUTTMACHER INST. (updated Apr. 19, 2022), <https://www.guttmacher.org/article/2021/10/26-states-are-certain-or-likely-ban-abortion-without-roe-heres-which-ones-and-why>.

² *Id.*

³ *If Roe v. Wade Falls: Travel Distance for People Seeking Abortion*, GUTTMACHER INST., <https://states.guttmacher.org/#new-york> (last visited May 31, 2022).

abortion referrals. CPCs exist solely to intercept and dissuade pregnant people from making fully informed decisions about their healthcare such as the choice to obtain an abortion. Including these organizations in a list for an individual seeking abortion services is dangerous and misleading.

Google has previously been made aware that this issue exists and has engaged in efforts to remedy the situation. In 2018, for example, Google agreed to investigate reports of CPCs being included in abortion search queries on Google Maps.⁴ In 2019, Google again acknowledged its efforts to deploy human analysts to tackle the issues arising from Google Maps' difficulty distinguishing facilities offering abortions from those that do not.⁵ Despite these efforts, it has come to our attention that this issue continues to persist in some New York regions, providing misleading information to pregnant people seeking abortion services in those areas. For example, a Google Maps search for "abortion Binghamton, NY" lists several crisis pregnancy centers such as Life Choices Center and Women's Life Services along with legitimate health care providers who offer abortion and abortion counseling.

With the expectation that New York will be seeing an increasing number of pregnant people from out of state seeking abortion services in our state—often traveling here at great financial cost and inconvenience—it is imperative that pregnant people are receiving accurate information and are able to obtain the medical services they need efficiently and with minimal confusion.

OAG is requesting that you undertake an effort to ensure that search results for providers of abortion services provide accurate results throughout New York State so that any search results in the state bring up local facilities that are confirmed to provide abortion services. Please contact our office to discuss this matter further and to discuss a timeframe for the above request.

Sincerely,



Darsana Srinivasan
Chief, Health Care Bureau

⁴ Robin Marty, *How Google Maps Leads Women Seeking Abortions Astray*, GIZMODO (Feb. 12, 2018), <https://gizmodo.com/how-google-maps-leads-women-seeking-abortions-astray-1822882758>

⁵ Carter Sherman, *Google Maps is Still Directing Women Seeking Abortions to Pro-Life Clinics—and a Memorial for the 'Unborn'*, VICE NEWS (Sept. 6, 2019), <https://www.vice.com/en/article/ywap9b/google-maps-is-still-directing-women-seeking-abortions-to-pro-life-clinics-and-a-memorial-for-the-unborn>.