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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION,
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WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6300

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VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

The Honorable Xavier Becerra
Secretary
Department of Health and Human Services

Secretary Becerra:

It has come my attention that the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) ReproductiveRights.gov website directs individuals to Abortion Finder, an organization that advertises a directory of "trusted (and verified) abortion service providers and assistance resources in the United States."¹ An individual looking for an abortion provider can input their personal information including their location, first day of their last period, and their age.² If an individual is less than 18 years of age, Abortion Finder provides information on how to obtain an abortion procedure or the abortion pill, information on the abortion laws of their state, and information to help the individual seek judicial bypass, a judicial process that allows individuals younger than 18 to get an abortion without involving a parent or legal guardian.³

Abortion Finder also advertises that the information you provide is "private and confidential" and that it "never collect[s] or share[s] your personal information."⁴ However, when an individual enters information into AbortionFinder.org, its parent company Bedsider.org, operated by Power to Decide, may collect and store an individual's personal information, such as "name, e-mail address, telephone number, zip code, and date of birth."⁵ The website may also automatically collect some information about an individual's computer, such as their "IP address, Web browser software (such as Internet Explorer), and referring website" and "may use [this] information . . . in connection with [its] business."⁶ This includes providing the user with products

¹ ABORTIONFINDER.ORG, <https://www.abortionfinder.org/> (last viewed Feb. 28, 2023). Abortion Finder is operated by Bedsider, a project of Power to Decide.

² *Id.*

³ For example, *see also Results*, ABORTIONFINDER.ORG, <https://www.abortionfinder.org/> (last viewed Feb. 28, 2023).

⁴ ABORTIONFINDER.ORG, <https://www.abortionfinder.org/> (last viewed Feb. 28, 2023).

⁵ *Privacy Policy*, BEDSIDER, https://www.bedsider.org/privacy_policy (effective May 20, 2020).

⁶ *Id.*

and services, advertising, and performing business analysis.⁷ Furthermore, Power to Decide permits third parties to collect this information “for business purposes . . . including but not limited to providing advertising on Bedsider and elsewhere based on users’ online activities over time and across different sites, services, and devices.”⁸

As a doctor and member of Congress, I find it abhorrent that the federal government would use taxpayer dollars to promote a website that offers this type of information, especially to help minors as young as “15 and younger” obtain an abortion without their parent’s knowledge. I am also concerned that this outside organization may be collecting information on minors and using this information to send them targeted advertising for abortion-related procedures. By linking to Abortion Finder, HHS, and thereby the federal government, has once again prioritized a political agenda over parental rights and children’s safety. Therefore, I request HHS to respond to the following questions on a question-by-question basis no later than March 24, 2023:

1. Why did HHS choose to link to Abortion Finder, a third-party website that advertises abortion procedures and judicial bypass instructions to individuals 15 years and younger? What factors led to this decision?
2. Were any taxpayer funds used to support Abortion Finder? If so, which ones?
3. Does HHS know how Bedsider.org or Power to Decide is using the information inputted into Abortion Finder? If so, how? If not, why not?
4. Does HHS know if Bedsider.org or Power to Decide is using information inputted into Abortion Finder to advertise abortion-related procedures and other information to individuals 15 years and younger? If not, why not?

Bill Cassidy, M.D.

Bill Cassidy, M.D.
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and
Pensions

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ *Id.*