

EQUITY

FORWARD

Two-Thirds of the Fetal Tissue Ethics Advisory Board Members Elevate Ideology Over Science

The Trump Administration's New Fetal Tissue Ethics Advisory Board is Majority Anti-Abortion

Research using fetal tissue has been used to create life saving vaccines and treatments for a myriad of diseases and medical conditions. Yet, in 2019, the Trump administration issued restrictions banning the use of newly acquired fetal tissue research in federally funded research. This decision came contrary to the word of National Institute of Health (NIH) scientists, and rather, at the behest of anti-abortion lobbyists with outsized influence over the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). HHS [announced](#) the formation of a new "Human Fetal Tissue Ethics Advisory Board", to be housed within NIH, in February 2020. On July 31, 2020, the Advisory Board [convened](#) for the first time. The names of the [members](#) were released to the public on the morning of this meeting.

Of the fifteen Advisory Board members, Equity Forward found that ten of them have anti-abortion views and connections that have influenced their scientific research and policy decisions. Also notable is that five of the members are employees of the [Charlotte Lozier Institute](#) – the research arm of the anti-abortion extremist group [Susan B Anthony List](#), which [worked](#) with this administration to roll back research using fetal tissue and has actively applauded efforts to continue these restrictions despite fetal tissue's utility for developing treatment and vaccines for COVID-19.

Members with Anti-Abortion Views and Connections:

Paige Comstock Cunningham, Chair: Cunningham is chair of the Advisory Board as well as interim president of Taylor University. She previously worked as the executive director of the Center for Bioethics & Human Dignity, as well as president of notable anti-abortion organization [Americans United for Life](#). Cunningham worked with numerous members of the Advisory Board previously.

Maureen Condic: Condic is an [associate scholar at the Charlotte Lozier Institute](#) and a professor at the University of Utah School of Medicine. She has served within the Trump administration before as a [member](#) of the National Science Foundation's oversight body. Condic has [testified](#) before Congress in favor of extremist abortion bans; Condic was also [involved](#) in the discredited 2016 Planned Parenthood fetal tissue congressional investigation as a scientific Advisor.

G. Kevin Donovan: Donovan is an [associate scholar at the Charlotte Lozier Institute](#) and a professor/director at Georgetown's Pellegrino Center for Clinical Bioethics. Like a number of his colleagues on the Advisory Board, he made his anti-abortion views clear in testifying against fetal tissue research during the 2016 debunked congressional hearing targeting Planned Parenthood.

EQUITY

FORWARD

Two-Thirds of the Fetal Tissue Ethics Advisory Board Members Elevate Ideology Over Science

Ashley K. Fernandes: Fernandes is associate director of the Ohio State University's Center for Bioethics. He is also [president trustee for Ohio Right to Life](#), a position through which [he has made his anti-reproductive rights ideology clear](#).

C. Ben Mitchell: Mitchell is a professor of moral philosophy at Union University and has been a [senior fellow](#) at the anti-abortion [Center for Bioethics and Human Dignity](#). Mitchell [testified before Congress](#) decrying the Affordable Care Act's birth control benefit as a violation of conscience. He has also long been an [outspoken opponent of stem cell research](#).

Tadeusz Pacholczyk: Pacholczyk is director of education at the National Catholic Bioethics Center, a position he has used to [proclaim](#) that it is "morally forbidden" to research using fetal tissue from elective abortions. He has also vocally opposed embryonic stem cell research.

David Prentice: Prentice is [vice president and research director of CLI](#). Prentice is an anti-abortion biochemist who has used his work in the field to advocate against research using [stem cells](#) and [fetal tissue](#). In 2018, after failing to [adequately disclose his ties to CLI](#), he [testified](#) before Congress that "ample scientific alternatives [to fetal tissue research] exist" and that such research is no longer needed— these are claims which notable scientists have [sharply denied](#) — including a [researcher whose work Prentice cited](#).

Kathleen Marie Schmainda: Schmainda is an [associate scholar at the Charlotte Lozier Institute](#) and a biophysics professor at the Medical College of Wisconsin. Like a number of her colleagues on the Advisory Board, she firmly opposed fetal tissue research due to her anti-abortion views [while testifying](#) at a congressional hearing as a part of the 2016 debunked investigation of Planned Parenthood. She has [accused](#) the scientific community of peer pressuring her and others into researching with fetal tissue.

Ingrid Skop: Skop is an [associate scholar at the Charlotte Lozier Institute](#). She has [served as chairman-elect](#) of the American Association of Pro-Life Obstetricians & Gynecologists (AAPLOG). AAPLOG uses their members' medical certifications to push false information regarding abortion and contraception. Skop has used her positions to do the same.

H. Joseph Yost: Yost is vice chairman for basic science research at the University of Utah. He has [opposed embryonic stem cell research](#) with a number of [his Advisory Board colleagues](#) and other anti-abortion extremists.

Other Members:

- Greg F. Burke
- Lawrence Goldstein
- Ashwini Lakshmanan
- Thomas J. Meade
- Susan K. Murphy