

Petition launched to take pregnant Texas woman off ventilator

January 9 2014

Abortion rights activists launched a petition Wednesday to take a pregnant American woman declared brain dead off life support in Texas, as requested by her family.

The body of Marlise Munoz, 33, has been maintained with technology for more than a month because of her pregnancy. She had collapsed at her home in late November due to a possible pulmonary embolism as she got up to take care of her first-born son who is now 15 months old.

She had told her husband and parents that she never wanted to be kept alive by a machine should tragedy strike, but a law in conservative Texas is stopping them from carrying out her wishes because she is pregnant.

"The Munoz family deserves better than this—and it's up to Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott to show them that the state of Texas respects their wishes and their privacy," NARAL Pro-Choice America said in a petition.

It urged Abbott to "leave difficult, personal decisions in the hands of families and support the Munoz family's decision to take Marlise off of [life support](#), as she wanted."

The case is particularly sensitive because it involves several hot-button issues: abortion, euthanasia and interpretation of the law.

Munoz, who is under care at John Peter Smith Hospital in Fort Worth,

was declared dead there based on neurological criteria, meaning her brain can no longer keep her body alive and functioning. But state law demands she be kept alive so long as she is pregnant.

"JPS has a responsibility to be a good corporate citizen while providing compassionate, quality care for our patients," spokeswoman Jill Labbe told AFP.

"In all cases, JPS will follow the law as it applies to health care in the state of Texas. State law says life-sustaining treatment cannot be withheld or withdrawn from a pregnant patient."

Munoz was admitted to the hospital on November 26, and her condition in the [intensive care unit](#) is "serious," Labbe said, without elaborating.

Her husband Erick told local ABC television affiliate WFAA that he was worried about the state of the fetus, not knowing how long it had been deprived of oxygen before his wife was discovered after her collapse.

The fetus has not yet reached the point of viability outside the womb, usually defined as at least 23 weeks' gestation.

"It's not a matter of pro-choice and pro-life," said Munoz's mother, Lynne Machado, 60.

"It's about a matter of our daughter's wishes not being honored by the state of Texas."

The complex case also raises the question of how the law is interpreted, with critics like The Dallas Morning News saying Munoz's body now serves as "nothing more now than an incubator."

Texas is among 12 US states that have adopted strict laws requiring that

a woman be kept alive if pregnant, regardless of the state of her pregnancy.

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