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Jerrica Kirkley, chief medical officer and co-founder of Plume, and Kiki Freedman, CEO and co-founder of Hey Jane, discuss how their companies interact with local and national policies related to healthcare. They observe that digital healthcare companies like theirs can supplement policy gaps and advocate for change, but can't fix every problem.



Transcript

- Probably no secret to many people in this room, 00:00:05,340 there have been many anti-trans bills specifically proposed in the last three years.. In fact, 390 and 155 in 2022.. So policy interacts in a big way with the work that we do since we are entirely dedicated to serving the trans community.. Many of these bills also of course overlap with the healthcare context.. But even beyond that, those are the ones you see in the news, but there's also nuances to the care that we do and medications that we provide that are affected by various laws and various regulations.. So it is, yeah, it's very intricately linked to everything that we're doing.. And, you know, I think entrepreneurs in general tend to operate at the margins to a certain extent, right? We're often trying to solve problems that our industries haven't attended to well.. So we kind of have to step outside the mainstream.. And when you do that, you tend to be one, I think under the microscope a bit more, and two, having to confront a lot more regulatory issues and legal and policy issues than maybe otherwise.. So we're navigating it every day..

And personally, we make this a part of our vision, which is of course, first and foremost to provide direct patient care, but also to use that patient care, the insights we gain and the data we have to actually inform not only guidelines for care inside Plume and outside of Plume for all trans people, but also policy change, and to truly transform healthcare for every trans life.. And for the past 12 months, I've spent a lot of time meeting with legislators, going to the House, the Senate, White House administration, and making sure that people are aware of the needs of the trans community, especially in a healthcare context.. So yeah, it's on our minds every day, for sure.. - Yeah, thank you.. 00:01:58,053 Kiki, thanks.. - We have also been navigating 00:02:03,570 a fairly dynamic regulatory environment recently.. And of course, the fall of Roe really exacerbated a lot of the standing issues, but we've been tracking a lot of this closely for a while, and SB8 I think was really a precipitating factor as well out of Texas.. When Roe fell, we had to essentially reevaluate the locations of all of our providers as we assessed, you know, laws that were rolling out in real time.. One of our really amazing doctors was driving every single day from Ohio to Pennsylvania in order to be able to provide care.. I do think that entrepreneurship has a huge role to play in supplementing political failings and policy failures..

We're able to move more quickly, to try new things, to innovate where larger infrastructural changes cannot.. I think in the case of Hey Jane, we're able to reduce travel distances by allowing people to get care delivered directly to their home or just over a border into a legal state.. We can provide emotional support at their fingertips via messaging in our app.. But I also

think it's really important to acknowledge it's not a panacea.. There's no way for any single business to overrule these massive changes and the impacts they have.. So sure, we can make things easier, but the logistical burdens are still huge when you have bans across entire states.. We can provide more emotional support than may have been available before, but the anxiety of having your body criminalized is something that we're not gonna be able to overcome without more infrastructural change.. So we just think that good policy, good business has to coexist.. We're supporting research to help drive that policy forward, showing again and again that the model is safe, effective, patients prefer it in many cases.. So hopefully, we'll see some movement and science-driven policy decisions soon...