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MISSOURI HOUSE PASSES ABORTION RESTRICTION BILL
Government intrusion and a new crime of 'coercion' only hurt doctor/patient relationship

Monday, April 21, 2008: Jefferson City, MO - Today, the Missouri House of Representatives voted to pass HCS HB 1831 & 1472 (Onder), the Abortion Restriction Bill of 2008. As the bill moves to the Senate for consideration, Planned Parenthood affiliates in Missouri denounce this bill as an effort to further mandate government intrusion between doctor and patient and create a new crime of 'coercion of an abortion.'

"Missouri already has some of the nation's strictest laws requiring informed consent and a waiting period for abortion," said Peter Brownlie, President and CEO of Planned Parenthood of Kansas and Mid-Missouri¹. "This is just another attempt by those backing these types of bills to place more unnecessary burdens on the woman and her doctor, and does nothing to actually prevent unintended pregnancies."

"This bill does nothing to protect or empower women but once again inserts politicians into personal and private health care decisions," said Kellie Rohrbaugh, Director of Public Affairs for Planned Parenthood of Southwest Missouri. "This particular measure is only one piece of a larger agenda backed by groups who are working toward an all-out ban on abortion care in Missouri."

This bill includes several provisions that would require 'the physician who is to perform or induce the abortion' to meet with the woman 24 hours before her procedure. Current law already mandates counseling but allows a woman to receive counseling from her own private or preferred physician. The bill also mandates that physicians use brochures and videos developed by state bureaucrats, rather than information provided by trusted medical organizations like the American Medical Association, and to post signs carrying false-promises of state-backed financial assistance if carrying the child to term.

“We already go through the utmost care to make sure that every woman is provided with medically accurate information and that she has spoken with our experienced, professional counselors to make sure she is aware of all her options,” said Alison Gee, Vice President of Public Policy at Planned Parenthood of the St. Louis Region. “The requirement that the counseling be done strictly by the physician who is to perform the procedure may well lead to a delay of days, or possibly weeks, between counseling and the procedure, since many of our physicians are only scheduled one day per week. This is nothing more than election year politics.”

The bill also creates a new crime of ‘coercion of an abortion,’ that broadens the definition of ‘coercion’ and in many cases would prohibit the woman from consenting to an abortion if she has freely consented and believes this is the best decision for herself based upon her circumstances. In addition, it would make physicians—or anyone assisting them—criminals for helping women obtain an abortion “with knowledge” that the woman has been “coerced” under this new, overly broad definition of ‘coercion’

“This will lead women to stay silent regarding their personal life circumstances and change the informed consent counseling from open and honest conversation about the woman’s well-being to a bureaucratic checklist,” said Tonia Stubblefield, CEO of Tri-Rivers Planned Parenthood.

Planned Parenthood opposes HCS HB 1831 & 1472 and will do everything possible to prevent its passage in the Missouri Senate and to protect access to safe and legal health care – including the right to abortion care in Missouri.

For summary language and full text of the bill go to:

<http://www.house.state.mo.us/billtracking/bills081/bills/hb1831.htm>.

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¹ Current Missouri law includes, but is not limited to, the following restrictions:

- A ban on state funding for abortion.
- A ban on public facilities or employees being used in the performance of abortions.
- A prohibition on insurance companies offering abortion coverage as part of their regular benefits package.
- A mandate that women both sign a consent form saying that her decision is free and voluntary and wait at least 24 hours before having an abortion.
- A requirement that minors have written parental consent before having an abortion.
- A ban on abortions after viability unless necessary to preserve the woman’s life or health.

Every year for the past 5 years the Missouri legislature has passed restrictive bills or eliminated programs designed to prevent abortion through family planning and sex education.

To view current Missouri law related to abortion care go to: <http://www.moga.mo.gov/statutes/c188.htm>