Michigan Section of the
American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

Opposition to Senate Bill No. 160
March 1, 2011

We are the board certified physicians who practice obstetrics and gynecology in this state and we are women's health doctors.

We are opposed to SB160, as written, on several important points.

This legislation overlooks the complexities involved in providing medical care to a mother and her fetus prior to and at the threshold of viability.

There is a risk:benefit relationship to any medical condition, including pregnancy, and the treatments and procedures available to manage it. Blanket statements such as those in Section 2A fail to recognize the balance that physicians must evaluate when caring for their patients. Furthermore, the constant expansion of medical knowledge related to these conditions and procedures cannot be reasonably monitored and interpreted by legislators with many other important issues to address. For these reasons, decisions regarding the specifics of the practice of medicine are left to qualified physicians who are licensed by the State.

The term "partial birth abortion" is not medically recognized because it is nonspecific and does not account for gestational age, lethal fetal conditions, maternal health status or other conditions that influence the risk:benefit relationship of the pregnancy and any procedures. As such, the phrase is at high risk for inappropriate application to any circumstance involving the termination of a pregnancy in any way at any time.

As the medical providers most frequently facing life and death decisions for mothers and their fetuses, it is essential that any legislation that invokes criminal penalties for noncompliance with the letter of the law be drafted with uncompromising clarity of requirement as well as intent. Anything less will drive away ob-gyn physicians and leave women of the great state of Michigan and their families with restricted access to the quality obstetrical care that they need and deserve.

The Michigan Section of the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists is prepared to assist the legislature with fulfilling its stated attempt to protect the lives and welfare of pregnant women who require termination of pregnancy at later gestational ages.

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