

 Planned Parenthood® March 1, 2011  
Advocates of Michigan

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Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

As organizations focused on promoting and protecting access to the full range of reproductive health care, the American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan and Planned Parenthood Advocates of Michigan urge you to oppose Senate Bills 160 and 161.

In 2003, the United States Congress passed and President Bush signed the Federal Abortion Ban, a law that criminalizes abortion procedures in the second trimester of pregnancy that doctors say are safe and the best to protect women's health. In 2007, the U.S. Supreme Court said that the law was constitutional—overturning thirty plus years of precedent requiring abortion restrictions to include an exception protecting women's health. This federal law is currently in effect in Michigan.

Senate Bill 160 is nearly identical to the Federal Abortion Ban. Therefore, the conduct it criminalizes is already a crime in Michigan—just as it is nationwide. Without Senate Bill 160, a doctor who performs an illegal abortion would already face penalties. Senate Bill 160 would do nothing more than make the same behavior prosecutable by state law enforcement officials. Proponents of this redundant law continue their pattern of using politically motivated rhetoric to argue that it is necessary because abortion harms women's health. To be clear, this bill will not prevent one single abortion in the state of Michigan and does not protect women's health.

Senate Bill 160 is bad policy. This bill keeps doctors from using their best medical judgment to decide what medical procedure is safest for each individual patient. Leading obstetricians and gynecologists at major medical institutions oppose the federal ban because it would prevent them from providing the care that is best to protect their patients' health. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the American Nurses Association and other medical groups oppose the federal ban. This bill sends the message that the state of Michigan believes the Michigan Legislature, not doctors, know what will best protect the health of a pregnant woman.

If it is the goal of the Michigan Legislature to reduce the number of abortions in Michigan, preventing unintended pregnancies should be their top priority. We should be working together to move forward common-sense policies that would improve access for women to family planning and prenatal health care, expand access to and insurance coverage of contraceptives, and provide abstinence plus education to our young people. These are the common ground solutions that will prevent women from being faced with an unintended pregnancy.

The American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan and Planned Parenthood Advocates of Michigan urge you to oppose this unnecessary and redundant bill.

Sincerely,



Shelli Weisberg  
Legislative Director  
American Civil Liberties  
Union of Michigan



Sarah Scranton  
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