Right to Life of Michigan Director of Public Information Pamela Sherstad
Testimony in support of HB 5711
Senate Judiciary Committee – July 26, 2012

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak in favor of HB 5711, the primary bill in a package addressing the substandard medical practices of the abortion industry in our state. HB 5711 amends the Michigan Public Health Code to bring about long overdue reforms.

Some of Michigan's laws need to be updated to insure abortion clinics are licensed and inspected. An invasive surgical procedure accounts for the vast majority of abortions performed. The potential for abortion complications is real. This was the case for Tonya Reaves.

Less than one week ago, 24-year old Tonya Reaves died following an abortion at a Chicago Planned Parenthood. A family member said Tonya was engaged to be married and had one son – Alvin – who just celebrated his first birthday. Tonya's death is a tragedy which touched the lives of many. Every successful abortion ends the life of a child preparing to be born and with every abortion there are risks.

A 52-page report compiled by members of the Right to Life of Michigan Legislative Office show that women's health is in jeopardy. The documentation reveals a pattern of deeply entrenched illegal and unethical practices throughout Michigan's abortion industry. The abuses fall into eight categories.

The categories are:

1. Illegal biohazard waste disposal and breaches of medical record privacy
2. Negligent operative and post-operative practices
3. Refusal to release patient medical records for patient use and follow-up care
4. Failure to report to the state abortion complications and patient deaths
5. Illegal storage and administration of controlled substances
6. Failure to ensure sterile, sanitary surgical equipment and a sterile operative environment
7. Violation of the law regarding informed consent for abortions; and
8. Performance of abortions past the point of viability without documentation of maternal health reason

While time does not allow for examples in each category, I will share one account of negligent post-operative practices which occurred at Women's Advisory Center in Livonia. The

center is owned by Reginald Sharpe. The Attorney General administrative lawsuit against Sharpe relates the following sequence of events regarding an abortion performed in 2005. [1]

> The two-day, late-term procedure was performed by Sharpe and another doctor. On the second day, Sharpe was completing the procedure alone when he told the patient he was unable to access the fetus. The patient was directed to the "recovery room" to rest. Sharpe then left the clinic for three hours, with the patient in the recovery room unattended by any licensed medical professional.
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> The patient's abortion was incomplete and she went into labor in the recovery room. Unlicensed staff refused the patient's repeated *requests to call an ambulance* or have her mother, who was in the waiting room, come in to see her. After three hours of heavy bleeding, contractions, and pain, she screamed loud enough for her mother to hear her from the waiting room. The mother demanded entry into the recovery room, where she found her daughter in labor. She asked the staff to help deliver the baby, but they refused.
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> The mother helped her daughter deliver the stillborn baby, and immediately after asked the staff to call an ambulance. *Staff again refused to call an ambulance. The patient's mother called EMS on her cell phone. When EMS arrived, the center's doors were locked and staff refused them entry,* delaying their entry for at least 8 minutes.
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> When the patient arrived at Botsford Hospital, ER staff stabilized her and assessed the stillborn baby to be 27 weeks gestation.

This is only one account of negligence brought to light by a complaint. The Women's Advisory Center is still open and according to its web site performs abortion through 24 weeks gestation. It is alarming to know that some abortion facilities have operated in our state for decades and have never once been inspected. Only 4 of the 32 abortion facilities in Michigan are licensed. When regulators have responded to complaints lodged against abortion facilities, unacceptable, unsanitary conditions have been found and documented in Statements of Deficiencies by the Michigan Department of Community Health; complaints filed with the Attorney General; complaints filed with the State of Michigan Office of Health Services; and court documents.

I am here today to ask that you intervene and correct the substandard medical practices within the abortion industry. I am here today because I care about women's safety. I am here today to support HB 5711.

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[1] In the Matter of Reginald D. Sharpe, D.O., File No. 51-05-98202.