

Senate Judiciary - 6-18-13
SB 254 – Parental Rights Restoration Act

Mister Chairman and members of the committee, I am Rebecca Mastee with the Michigan Catholic Conference, the official Public Policy voice of the Catholic Church in Michigan. I thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of this important reform to abortion practices regarding minor girls.

In 1990 the Michigan Catholic Conference and Right to Life of Michigan joined efforts to successfully coordinate the citizens' initiative that put the state's current laws regarding parental consent prior to abortion on the books.

This law is essential to ensuring parental involvement in minors' health decisions. Parents are often the only ones with specific information about their child's health history, which is important to know for any type of medical procedure, including abortion. Furthermore, what is a parent to do if their daughter has an abortion, unbeknownst to them, and comes home with physical complications? How will they know how to help her or be able to calculate the seriousness of the medical situation?

Fortunately, a large body of evidence shows that parental involvement laws throughout the nation work – as evidenced by their effectiveness in reducing abortion among minor girls. It should also be pointed out that strong bi-partisan support continues for parental involvement laws. A recent 2011 Gallup poll found that most Americans favor parental consent prior to any abortion for teens and girls under 18, with 71% overall supporting such measures. Specifically, 61% of those polled, a majority of those who identify as Democrats, also favored this regulation. Finally, of note, this legislation previously passed through the Michigan Legislature in 2004 with strong bi-partisan support prior to being vetoed by then Governor Granholm.

SB 254 is a practical measure, which should not be controversial. It ensures parental rights are being honored by requiring the appeals process to work just as in any other judicial case. The practice of “judge-shopping,” unfortunately allowable under current law, undermines the judicial process as we know it and must be ended. SB 254 will prevent a girl from filing a petition for waiver of parental consent, in the Family Division of Circuit Court, if she has previously been denied a waiver concerning the same pregnancy. Yet, should she seek an appeal, the legislation requires that appeal proceedings be expedited and remain confidential.

This legislation has no implication on whether or not a minor girl can acquire an abortion, but rather ensures that necessary safeguards are in place to both protect her and ensure that parental rights are maintained.

SB 254 is sound and reasonable legislation, and I urge your support.