
Planned Parenthood Advocates of Michigan

Members of the Michigan Senate Health Policy Committee
April 12, 2016

Subject: SB 753

At Planned Parenthood, we work every day to make sure women receive the high-quality health care they need in a safe, respectful environment. We are very supportive of telehealth in general because it expands access to health care for patients in every corner of the state. We strongly believe that health care includes abortion and unfortunately, as written, SB 753 does not provide women the full spectrum of health care options. Therefore, we oppose this bill.

We believe women in rural parts of Michigan deserve the same access to health care that women south of Saginaw have. This legislation selects which women have access, ultimately punishing rural women. Doesn't that defy the spirit in which this bill was written? Remember, every county in Michigan has a veterinarian—23 counties don't have OB/GYNs.

Let's be clear, politicians are not medical experts and yet this legislation has been written with the end goal of having safe, legal abortion difficult or even impossible to access. We can call it what it is—an ideological and political plot to place barriers between women and their doctors—again, defying the spirit in which this bill was created.

Abortions are very safe. Data, including from the CDC, show that abortion has over a 99% safety record. And studies show that women experience complications less than 1% of the time.

Telehealth delivery of medication abortion has been demonstrated to be just as safe and effective as in-person protocols, a fact that is supported by The American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. In fact, medical experts like ACOG oppose¹ laws like these.

A study² on the effects of a telemedicine program in Iowa found that the abortion rate did not increase, but that women had increased odds of obtaining both a medication abortion (rather than surgical) and an abortion earlier in pregnancy, concluding that telemedicine could reduce the amount of second-trimester abortion. In fact, the Iowa Supreme Court ruled last year that preventing physicians from administering a medication abortion remotely through video teleconferencing in that state placed an undue burden on a woman's right to access abortion services.

This bill is part of a broader effort to restrict or end access to safe, legal abortion in Michigan. Ultimately, decisions about whether to choose adoption, end a pregnancy, or raise a child must be left to a woman, her family and her faith, with the counsel of her doctor.

¹ <http://www.acog.org/Resources-And-Publications/Committee-Opinions/Committee-on-Health-Care-for-Underserved-Women/Increasing-Access-to-Abortion>

² <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3518368/>

At Planned Parenthood, our top priority is making sure that every woman, no matter where she lives, can make her own personal, private health care decisions without interference from politicians. And that includes telehealth medicine for all reproductive health choices, not just some.

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