Senate Bill 155 Proponent Testimony

Senate Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee

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Chairman Burke, Vice Chairman Huffman, Ranking Member Antonio and members of the Committee, thank you for providing the opportunity for proponent testimony on Senator Peggy Lehner’s Senate Bill 155, which would establish protocols for notifying women of the potential of reversing a chemical abortion procedure once it has been begun. I am here today representing the Right to Life Action Coalition of Ohio, a network of organizations who collaborate to support policies to protect the vulnerable and defenseless, especially the unborn. Our coalition is supportive of Senator Lehner’s legislation.

Non-surgical abortions account for approximately one-third of the total number of abortion performed annually. This chemical procedure, usually performed during the first trimester of pregnancy, requires a pregnant woman take a combination of drugs, mifepristone (RU-486) and misoprostol, in order to kill an unborn child and induce her body to expel the dead child. The first dose, the RU-486, works to block progesterone, a natural hormone that is foundational to the continuation of a healthy pregnancy, and over approximately 72 hours will kill the unborn child. Then misoprostol is utilized to condition the woman’s body to expel the baby’s body.

This is where SB 155 comes into play: Within that 72 hour period, should a woman regret the decision to begin the chemical abortion procedure or actually change her mind about it, a therapy can be utilized by the pregnant woman to save the unborn child’s life. That therapy, being provided right now by over 500 medical providers, utilizes the administration of large doses of progesterone, the natural hormone produced during pregnancy, to reverse the effects of RU-486.

This therapy is showing great success. A 2018 peer-reviewed study showed that between 64-68% of pregnancies where the woman chose to discontinue the chemical abortion procedure and opt for the reversal procedure were saved. Given that this therapy utilizes a naturally-occurring hormone found in the pregnant woman’s body, there have been no increase in birth defects and more encouragingly there is a lower pre-term delivery rate among this population.

SB 155 would require the Department of Health to publish and maintain information on the Department’s web site to inform pregnant women of this therapy option. The bill also requires the abortion provider to, as part of the informed consent procedure 24 hours prior to the abortion, to provide copies of this information to the pregnant woman. Failure to do so would result in a first degree misdemeanor on first offense, and a fourth-degree felony on subsequent offenses. The bill also provides a woman, who wanted to reverse her decision but was not provided the information to seize such opportunity, to file a claim for wrongful death of her unborn child should the abortion continue to completion.

This bill ensures that women are provided information on full medical options available to her around this procedure, and our coalition is happy to support a pro-science, pro-woman and pro-life bill. We look forward to the committee favorably reporting this bill from committee, and I would be happy to take any questions.