

Testimony of Mary Akerstrom in Opposition to House Bill 2253
Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee, March 22, 2013

Madam Chair and members of the committee,

I most strongly urge you to vote against HB2253. While I personally can understand moral opposition to abortion in general, these two bills propose violations to individual rights. Women who are free to choose abortion are also free to choose whether they have a child, or whether they give a child up for adoption. I was faced with this decision at age 17, unwed, still in H.S., and the decision was mine alone. I was fortunate at that time to have access to ALL the information concerning each option. Health procedures and possible outcomes were not falsely altered or withheld; I was informed of what the abortion procedure is, and of the risks associated with any normal pregnancy. Every citizen has a right to true and comprehensive information about their health care and a woman's pregnancy is no exception. These bills will not only dictate whether a woman can have access to abortion services, but it will also restrict her access to information about pregnancy and childbirth. Life does not begin at fertilization, it begins at birth. A zygote is not a viable human being. A fetus less than 32 weeks gestation will face many trials of survival. If we are to attempt to create legislation based on biology, let us stick to the facts.

The state cannot regulate an individual's health care. The issues of pregnancy are personal, not a matter of state affairs. No woman who may consider abortion takes this choice lightly. There are usually many factors in a person's life that cannot be addressed by legislature. We cannot regulate morality through the law, and HB 2253 is proof that the attempt to do so actually burdens the state with additional tax codes and invasive legislation that violates Doctor-Patient confidentiality. HB 2253 interfere with patient access to information to make the best choices for individual health and wellness. The state cannot restrict education and parent's rights to provide information concerning sexuality, birth control, childbirth, and abortion. This bill is an infringement of individual rights, and specifically targets women's rights.

I agree with the Supreme Court opinion of *Roe v. Wade*, that restricting abortion places an undue burden on women, and that the mental health state of any person must be taken into consideration of their ability to Parent a child. Pregnancy and childbirth do not automatically create a loving and able parent, nor do they create a stable and supportive environment. Justice Henry Blackburn wrote "The detriment that the State would impose on the pregnant woman by denying this choice altogether is apparent...Maternity, or additional offspring may force upon the woman a distressful life and future. Psychological harm may be imminent. Mental and physical health may be taxed by child care. There is also the distress, with all concerned, associated with the unwanted child, and there is the problem of bringing a child into a family already unable, psychologically or otherwise, to care for it."

In St. Louis, Washington University researchers found that abortions decreased when birth control was freely available to all women. (Mother Jones, Erika Eichelberger) Poor & low income women are 5 times as likely to experience unwanted pregnancies, and would benefit from clinics which provide free, comprehensive health care and birth

control education. Bill Moyers reports that 69% of women seeking abortion are economically disadvantaged, and 6 out of 10 women seeking abortion already have a child. Kansans for Life and the Catholic Coalition would better serve their communities by focusing on the children already here and struggling with poverty and abuse. Abortion is a private issue between a woman, her doctor, and her God.

Thank you,
Mary Akerstrom
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