

Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee
March 6, 2018

HB 2573 - Maternal Mortality

Dr. Hilary McLaren - Proponent

I'm Dr. Hillary McLaren, and I would like to speak in support of the proposed legislation that would form a maternal mortality review committee in Kansas. As a physician in training, I have the opportunity interact with a variety of patients in different settings. I see women from all walks of life: women with means and those without, women who speak a variety of languages, women in the armed forces, women with cancer, healthy women with normal pregnancies and women with serious medical problems in pregnancy. Every month, I am exposed to a different aspect of women's health.

This week I was caring for a young woman who was pregnant with her second child and nearing the end of her pregnancy. She had developed a blood clot in her leg that had traveled through her blood stream to her lungs. She was transferred to my hospital from a rural part of Kansas for this life threatening condition. We stabilized her, and I had the pleasure of delivering a healthy baby boy on Friday. This particular story has a happy ending, but I cannot help but think how her situation could have taken a very different turn.

Every year over 700 women die in the United States die due to pregnancy related conditions—a number that is staggeringly high compared to other developed nations. As a doctor, I am alarmed. All women deserve a safe pregnancy and I am compelled to assist them in that goal.

Thirty-three other states have formed committees of physicians, nurses, and other health professionals to discover why women are dying at such a rate in our nation. From these committees have come measures to address some of the most common causes of maternal death. The first few states that have undertaken these programs have seen a decline in their maternal mortality. While we can draw from the information collected by other states, we must also recognize that Kansas has a unique population. We need to understand how and why women in Kansas are dying.

All ob/gyn's strive to make pregnancy safer for women in our state and across the country. The only way we can do this is by identifying the danger. We must thoroughly investigate each and every maternal death in Kansas so that we can avoid such devastating outcomes in the future. I am here today, on the behalf of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and women across the state, to ask you to vote in favor of the formation of a maternal mortality review committee in Kansas. I truly believe it will be a life saving decision.