

Medical Students for Choice
Kansas City, Kansas

January 21, 2020

Kansas House Federal & State Affairs Committee
Kansas Senate Judiciary Committee
Room: 346-S

Topic: HCR 5019
Position: Opposed

As future physicians of Kansas, we find it necessary to voice our concern regarding a proposed constitutional amendment that would threaten a woman's right to personal autonomy. In medical school, we are taught that informed consent is paramount to the integrity of medicine, that socioeconomic determinants truly impact one's health, and that the patient-physician relationship is sacred.

Informed consent is one process by which we can protect a patient's personal autonomy. In order to make informed decisions, patients must fully understand the risks and benefits of a procedure, free of coercion. We are taught to counsel patients in a nondirectional manner, and to eliminate our own personal, religious, or political bias. To allow outside bias to influence a patient's decision is a gross violation of their autonomy. We feel that any legislative action that attempts to interfere with a patient's choice is also a violation of their autonomy.

Our coursework also includes socioeconomic determinants of health. Poverty, education, and access to healthcare all play an important role in a person's health. As student physicians, we are trained to identify those factors and work alongside our patients to alleviate these injustices. We know that if Kansas were to ever ban abortion, or place such severe restrictions that a relative ban takes place, financially well-off women will still be able to travel out of state and receive the healthcare they need. Poor women, however, will not have this option and as such, will be disproportionately affected. The state should not be creating barriers to healthcare. Instead, we should be making it easier for all Kansans to have access to comprehensive medical care, and women's healthcare should not be an exception.

Finally, we are taught to respect the sanctity of the patient-physician relationship. Our patients often come to us in dire circumstances. Those circumstances can be medical, financial, or social. Our patients confide in us in a unique way, and they trust us explicitly. Our exam rooms are a safe place, free from outside financial, social, or political harms. The personal decisions that our patients make in our exam rooms should be privy to the same protections outside the exam room.

This bill and subsequent amendment have the potential to dangerously harm women, especially those already disenfranchised. As the future healthcare providers of this state, we encourage you to strongly oppose this legislation. Medical decisions should be between a patient and her physician, not the government.

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