



WREN

Women's Rights & Empowerment Network

Statement in Opposition to H 3020

Senate Medical Affairs Sub-Committee

September 10, 2019

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony to this Committee. My name is Ann Warner and I am the CEO of the Women's Rights and Empowerment Network (WREN). WREN is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization with a mission to build a movement to advance the health, economic well-being, and rights of South Carolina's women, girls, and their families. We have more than 43,000 people in our statewide network, and we work with elected officials, advocates, non-profit partners, and businesses to improve equity and opportunity in our state.

On behalf of our organization, I am asking committee members to **vote in opposition to H.3020**, which would ban abortion as early as 6 weeks.

We are opposed to this bill for a multitude of reasons. The bill would undermine constitutionally protected rights; curtail individual freedoms and bodily autonomy; force people to go through pregnancy regardless of their individual circumstances; and harm South Carolinians by making it harder to access health care.

You will hear from others about the legal implications of this bill and the immense cost to our state. Our statement will focus on the extensive harms this misguided bill would cause to the health and economic well-being of individuals, particularly women.

First, even though proponents of this bill want to end abortions, there is no evidence that it will have this intended effect. The World Health Organization has concluded that restricting access to abortions does not reduce the number of abortions.ⁱ

What this bill would do is make it harder for people to get healthcare in South Carolina. South Carolina ranks 49th in the nation in healthcare for pregnant mothers and newborns. We rank 49th in number of midwives and Obstetricians / Gynecologists per capita.ⁱⁱ We rank 38th in the nation in infant mortality.ⁱⁱⁱ Our maternal mortality rates are 9th highest in the nation, and black mothers are more than four times more likely to die during pregnancy or in childbirth than white mothers.^{iv}

Extreme restrictions on abortion make pregnancy more dangerous. People denied abortions are more likely to experience serious complications from the end of pregnancy, including eclampsia and death.^v This law would not only make abortion nearly impossible to provide; it would also make it far more difficult for physicians to provide the best care possible for their patients for a range of conditions like

miscarriage, preeclampsia, diabetes or cancer, in the event that such care could indirectly lead to termination of a pregnancy. The fear of criminal prosecution could overshadow their best medical judgment and the wishes of their patients. In a state with one of the lowest rates of midwives and OB/GYNs per capita in the entire country, we simply cannot afford to make it even more difficult for doctors to do their jobs.

Restricting abortion access also has economic consequences for individuals. According to peer-reviewed studies, over a five year period, women refused an abortion are more likely to report not having enough money to cover basic living expenses such as housing, transportation and food. This ultimately leads to four times greater odds of living below the Federal Poverty Level (FPL).^{vi} In addition, women denied abortion are: more likely to stay with abusive partners, more likely to suffer anxiety and loss of self-esteem in the short term after being denied abortion, and less likely to have aspirational life plans for the coming year. The studies also conclude that denying abortion has serious and negative implications for the children born of unwanted pregnancy, as well as for the existing children in the family.^{vii}

Any person of reproductive age could be harmed by this law, but the worst effects would be on people who already face barriers to health care, including young people, people of color, people with disabilities, people with low incomes, and people living in rural areas.

Banning abortion at 6 weeks would insert the government into people's private lives and would rob them of the freedom to make a most personal decision: whether, when, and how to become a parent. South Carolinians have the intellectual and moral capabilities to make these decisions without government interference.

As a community leader, advocate, and parent, I strongly urge you to vote in opposition of H.3020, and support the health and economic well-being of the people of our state. By opposing this bill, you will send a clear message to South Carolinians that you respect our judgment, our well-being, and our lives.

Thank you for your consideration.

ⁱ World Health Organization, News Release, *Worldwide, An Estimated 25 Million Unsafe Abortions Occur Each Year* (Sept. 28, 2017), <http://www.who.int/news-room/detail/28-09-2017-worldwide-an-estimated-25-million-unsafe-abortion-occur-each-year>

ⁱⁱ Retrieved from <https://wallethub.com/edu/best-and-worst-states-to-have-a-baby/6513/#main-findings>

ⁱⁱⁱ Retrieved from <https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/annual/measure/IMR/state/SC>

^{iv} Retrieved from https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/health-of-women-and-children/measure/maternal_mortality/state/SC

^v Retrieved from <https://www.ansirh.org/research/turnaway-study>

^{vi} Retrieved from <https://www.ansirh.org/research/turnaway-study>

^{vii} Retrieved from <https://www.ansirh.org/research/turnaway-study>