

House Federal and State Affairs Committee & Senate Judiciary Committee
9:00 AM & 11:00 AM- Room 346-S
January 15th, 2020
Joint Testimony from (names) in Opposition to Bills HRC 5003 & SRC 1602

Dear Chairwoman Warren, Chairman Barker and Members of the Committees,

We write to you today to express our unequivocal opposition to HRC 5003 and SRC 1602, bills intent on banning abortion in the state of Kansas.

As physicians, we know that our patients, in consultation with us, are the ones who should be making their own health care decisions. Not politicians and not legislators.

Bodily autonomy is affirmed in the Kansas Constitution. This is something that should be celebrated, rather than stigmatized and shunned. It is proven that when people have control over their own bodies, their health care outcomes improve. In the study, *Measuring Women's and Children's Health and Well-being against Abortion Restrictions in the States*, there is a direct correlation shown between a state's accessibility to abortion and maternal and infant health outcomes. The more punitive a state is to abortion, the poorer the outcomes for pregnant women and their subsequent children.

https://www.reproductiverights.org/sites/crr.civicactions.net/files/documents/Priorities_Project.pdf

This proposed amendment is a direct attempt for politicians to remove these affirmed rights, at the great expense of reproductive health care. To take these decisions out of the hands of women and their doctors is dangerous for women's health and lives.

It is shameful and unethical to ask fellow Kansans to decide the fate of some of their neighbors, family and friends. It is unconscionable to ask fellow Kansans to take away the rights of others. No matter one's health care needs, we can all agree that we expect to make decisions about our health privately and in consultation with medical professionals. We do not turn outward and consult with strangers regarding our health care needs.

There is a code of ethics and conduct between physicians and their patients. This is a sacred relationship that is established and that relationship is built upon trust. Patients must be able to trust their physicians to provide factual advice that is in their own best interests; not the interests of the state. Politicians have no place in these relationships.

Women, with their doctors, are the best people to decide whether to bring a pregnancy to term or to terminate a pregnancy. The contributing factors that go into these carefully thought out decisions are too numerous to ever fit into a piece of legislation.

Please consider working to improve maternal health care, instead of further restricting abortion rights. Currently, the United States severely lags behind other westernized countries in maternal

health. In 2018, across the nation, 658 women died giving birth - that is 17.4 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births. When comparing the United States to 10 other similarly wealthy countries, the US ranks last in maternal mortality. By denying women the choice to make decisions, with their doctors, to the full spectrum of essential reproductive health care, is to exacerbate our already dire situation.

<https://www.vox.com/2020/1/30/21113782/pregnancy-deaths-us-maternal-mortality-rate>

Abortion care is part of the spectrum of reproductive health care. It is only one aspect, yet an essential component of women's reproductive health. To deny abortion to a segment of the population, is to deny this population of women equality and dignity in health care. If abortion care becomes unavailable or illegal, abortions will continue; what we will see is a rise in a growing public health crisis due to people being denied essential medical services.

<https://www.wired.com/story/abortion-bans-create-a-public-health-nightmare/>

Just because one might not like abortion does not mean it will stop. Restricting and reducing access, as these bills attempt to do, is in stark contradiction to protecting women and children's health.

Doctors who are proponents of eradicating safe abortion care and restricting access are forgetting the public health crisis we faced in our history. Women died from unmanaged illegal abortions. We cannot go back to these days. Abortion care must remain in the hands of women and their doctors.

We urge you to protect rights and expand access to health care, instead of taking rights away. We urge the House and Senate Committees to vote no on these dangerous measures.

Sincerely,

Juliet Marsh, MD
Christina Bourne, MD, MPH
Ruth Lehman Wiens, MD
Rebecca L Taub, MD, MPH, FACOG

Physicians for Trust Women