

January 14, 2021

“All men are possessed of equal and inalienable natural rights, among which are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.’ We are now asked: Is this declaration of rights more than an idealized aspiration? And, if so, do the substantive rights include a woman’s right to make decisions about her body, including the decision whether to continue her pregnancy? We answer these questions, ‘Yes.’” – Supreme Court Majority Opinion in Hodes & Nauser, MDs v Schmidt

Dear Chairman Barker and Colleagues:

In 2019 the Kansas Supreme Court ruled that women have a constitutional right to an abortion, citing the inalienable right of personal autonomy and the ability to control one’s own body, to assert bodily integrity, and to exercise self determination. To deprive women of their inalienable rights is not only wrong, it is sex-discrimination. As legislators it is our duty to protect individual rights, not take them away. Doing so is a dangerous precedent.

Despite its name, this bill does not value the lives of mothers. The amendment does not include exceptions for abortions in cases of rape, incest, or endangerment of the mother’s life. Further, it will force women to put their lives at risk in order to access reproductive healthcare services, because banning abortions does not lead to less abortions, only to less safe abortions.

If we value women’s lives, then we should be ensuring that their doctors have all the medical options available to them in order to help their patients. Abortion is one of the safest medical procedures in the United States and should be regulated as such.

The rights of women to bodily autonomy and to make personal, private medical decisions without the interference of the government, are rights too critical to be stripped from our state constitution or to be put to a popular vote. Especially when the proposed election date of August 2022 will only invite low-turnout and exclude the voices of unaffiliated voters.

The Kansas Supreme Court has made it clear, and women feel deeply, that we have an inalienable right to make our own healthcare decisions, free of discrimination. The state of Kansas should not regulate our bodies. Majority-male legislatures should not insert themselves into our patient-doctor relationships.

The most effective way to prevent unintended pregnancies is to expand access to healthcare and contraceptives, and by updating state curriculum to include comprehensive sex education. These are the policy priorities we should be focused on.

I urge you to vote no on HCR 5003.

Respectfully,
Rep. Lindsay Vaughn, HD 22