

Letters to the Editor

by Reba Boyd Wooden | Posted: Wednesday, January 25, 2017 4:49 pm



The following letter was delivered to Indiana lawmakers' mailboxes at the Indiana Statehouse on Jan. 23.

Our view

The members of the Health Access and Privacy Alliance, a coalition of statewide civic, educational, religious, professional and health organizations that work to improve access to health care, would like to educate the public about several bills being proposed this legislative session. We have identified these bills because they do not support the health and well-being of women, and because they do not meet our values of honesty, health, compassion and justice.

House Bill 1134, called “protection of life,” would essentially ban all abortions and set off a predictable legal battle over the constitutional right of a woman’s privacy — a question that has been settled law for more than 40 years and was upheld just last summer by the U.S. Supreme Court. The bill would also make certain types of birth control illegal. The author of the law, Rep. Curt Nisly (R-Goshen), knows such a law would generate a lawsuit, that the state of Indiana would lose, and that taxpayers would foot the bill for his grandstanding. If Rep. Nisly really wants to protect life, which we assume he does, he might look at offering legislation to fully fund state agencies that do this important work, such as the Department of Child Services.

House Bill 1128, authored by Rep. Ronald Bacon (R-Chandler), forces health providers and midwives to give patients false information, claiming that medication abortions can be reversed, or arrested. These claims are not supported by scientific evidence and are not consistent with medical practice. Laws similar to this have been successfully challenged in federal court on First Amendment grounds. Again, Indiana taxpayers would have to pay to defend this law in court.

Senate Bill 404, authored by Rep. Erin Houchin (R-Salem), is a misguided attempt to impose additional restrictions on minors seeking abortions by removing, in some cases, a judge’s ability to ensure their privacy. The bill limits access to the judicial bypass

option for minors who need this protection and would put their health and lives at risk. The often-lengthy process of judicial bypass offers a way for minors to get the health care they need despite challenging circumstances at home, and has been upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court. The bill also unnecessarily criminalizes physicians, religious leaders and others who may seek to counsel minors.

Senate Bill 118, authored by Rep. Dennis Kruse (R-Auburn), imposes even broader ultrasound requirements on women seeking an abortion than those currently being challenged in court. The proposed law would force a woman to view and listen to an ultrasound in violation of her privacy and free speech rights. This particularly heartless attempt to coerce a woman's private medical decision fails to take into account rape or incest and is unsympathetic to women who receive a tragic diagnosis. The bill forces unnecessary delays, increased expenses and travel difficulties which pose a substantial, undue burden on women and disproportionately impact poor and low-income patients. Lawmakers who are truly interested in helping women avoid such decisions could work harder to ensure all women receive family planning and contraceptive services.

Members of the Health Access and Privacy Alliance maintain these bills do nothing to promote the health and safety of women and families. We pledge to work with lawmakers on a variety of alternative initiatives that meet our standard of honesty, health, compassion and justice. Indiana lawmakers can lay the groundwork for improved health among all Hoosiers. Let's work together to make improved health a reality for our state.

Signed,

Reba Boyd Wooden

Health Access and Privacy Alliance

HAPA coalition members:

All Options Pregnancy Center — Bloomington; American Civil Liberties Union of Indiana; American Association of University Women, Indiana; American

Association of University Women, Indianapolis; American Association of University Women, Muncie; Center for Inquiry — Indiana; Congregation Beth El Zedek; Indiana Chapter Americans United for Separation of Church and State; Indiana Religious Coalition for Reproductive Justice; Indiana NOW; Indianapolis NOW; Indy Feminists; Jewish Community Relations Council; League of Women Voters Bloomington/Monroe; League of Women Voters Greater Lafayette; League of Women Voters Indiana; League of Women Voters Muncie/Delaware; National Council of Jewish Women; Planned Parenthood of Indiana and Kentucky; SEIU Healthcare Illinois/Indiana/Missouri/Kansas.

© 2017 Indianapolis Recorder Newspaper