House Committee Advances Women’s Right to Know Act

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The Pennsylvania House Health Committee voted on Monday to advance the Women’s Right to Know Act (House Bill 1077), which would offer a pregnant woman the chance to view an ultrasound image of her unborn child and observe the baby’s heartbeat prior to an abortion. The bill passed with support from both Republicans and Democrats on the committee.

“This legislation will empower women by giving them a high-tech tool that will provide them with information that will help them make informed decisions,” said State Representative Kathy Rapp (R). “Before a woman makes a decision as grave as abortion, she should have the chance to see what’s really going on in her pregnancy.”

According to the Guttmacher Institute, the former research arm of Planned Parenthood, 19 states regulate the provision of ultrasound by abortion providers. The Pennsylvania legislation simply follows a growing trend among the states to make as much information as possible available to pregnant women considering abortion.

“Women have a right to all relevant information about their pregnancies. With this additional information, women can be empowered to make informed choices for themselves and their families,” said Gallagher.

Some abortion advocates in Pennsylvania have objected to the bill on the grounds that it “forces a woman against her will” to undergo an ultrasound. However, this couldn't be further from the truth. Without this bill, ultrasounds are required in order for a woman to get an abortion in the first place. Abortionists use ultrasound technology to establish the gestational age of the unborn child in order to determine the method of abortion. The Women’s Right to Know Act ensures that the ultrasound image is made available to her. Under current Pennsylvania law, there is no provision giving her the right to view it.

Abortion advocates have even admitted House Bill 1077 does not force a woman to undergo an ultrasound against her will. Ultrasounds are already done on all patients requesting termination of a pregnancy at Planned Parenthood, said Suellen Craig, the CEO and president of Planned Parenthood of Central Pennsylvania, to the York Dispatch.

In the same article published in the York Dispatch on 2/3/12, State Representative Eugene DePasquale (D), who is also a Planned Parenthood official, said “It sounds like Republicans are telling doctors how to do their jobs and forcing information on women regardless of whether they want it.” The expression, “Knowledge is power” comes to mind when discussing this issue. There can be no circumstance where denying critical, medically-accurate information to a patient constitutes a burdensome imposition. Offering a woman information relevant to the grave decision she is about to make is empowering and essential for truly informed consent.

When a pregnant woman enters an abortion facility, she does so in a state of vulnerability. She is scared and often feels trapped by her circumstances. Workers or even forced upon her by a boyfriend or by her family and she has come to believe it is the only way out. In her state of stress and anxiety, she can provide much-needed clarity. The decision she is about to make is irrevocable. She will live with the consequences for the rest of her life. For many women, abortion has done irreparable damage, leaving them to suffer physical and psychological problems.

Many post-abortive women say that if they had known all the facts, including information about the development of their unborn child, they would have to ensure they have all the facts.

The prime sponsor of the Women's Right to Know Act, State Representative Kathy Rapp (R) said, “As a woman, I believe when a woman makes a crucial decision about her health and her body, she should be fully informed.”