

December 4, 2006

OPPOSE H.R. 6099, The “Unborn Child Pain Awareness Act”

Dear Member of Congress:

As organizations representing health care providers who serve millions of patients each year, we share the goal of ensuring that women seeking reproductive health care receive the highest quality care and accurate and complete information integral to their health care decisions. As such, we are strongly opposed to H.R. 6099, the “Unborn Child Pain Awareness Act.” H.R. 6099 inappropriately legislates the way in which doctors care for their patients, substitutes political ideology for scientific evidence, and penalizes physicians for medically responsible patient care. **We urge you to vote against this legislation.**

H.R. 6099 requires that providers inform a patient seeking a legal abortion after 20 weeks that there is “substantial evidence” that a fetus may feel pain during an abortion procedure. This is accomplished by forcing women to read and sign a statement with inflammatory rhetoric that projects a level of certainty that far exceeds the scientific research. Available science fails to support the conclusions drawn by the legislation and its required statement. As a federal district court found in 2004, “[t]he issue of whether fetuses feel pain is unsettled in the scientific community,” “[t]here is no consensus of medical opinion on the issue,” and “much of the debate on this issue is based on speculation and inference.”

Physicians have a legal, professional, and ethical obligation to share with their patients all relevant information about available health care options and to respect their patients’ decisions. This legislation interferes with the physician-patient relationship by requiring physicians to provide information that may be inappropriate or not applicable to that individual. Good medical practice demands that a patient and physician decide together on treatment based on the specific needs of each patient.

We believe that requiring misleading mandated communication is an inappropriate and dangerous intrusion of Congress into private health care decisions. Congress should not substitute political agendas for scientific knowledge. The women cared for by the members of our organizations deserve accurate, unbiased medical information. Please oppose this legislation so that doctors and patients, not politicians, can continue to determine what constitutes medically appropriate care.

Sincerely,



Vicki Saporta
President & CEO
National Abortion Federation



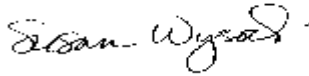
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