

**Prepared Testimony of
Katherine Bussard**

**Before the
Michigan House of Representatives
Committee on Health Policy
September 14, 2023**

Distinguished Chair and Members of the Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the “Reproductive Health Act,” including House Bills 4949, 4950, 4951, 4952, 4953, 4954, 4955, 4956, 4957, 4958, and 4959. My name is Katherine Bussard, Executive Director & C.O.O. of Salt & Light Global. Today, I am here to testify in my personal capacity. Out of an abundance of concern for women’s health and commitment to protecting to “A Woman’s Right to Know,” I speak in strong opposition to these mentioned bills.

The Reckless Policies of the Proposed Reproductive Health Act

The bills associated with the “Reproductive Health Act” propose to repeal several laws previously enacted by elected representatives of the people of Michigan to PROTECT women’s health. All of them were enforceable under Roe v. Wade and can be enforced under Proposal 3 of 2022, which allows the legislature to regulate the services protected by the act. Among other concerns, the removal of these common-sense practices directly endangers women and denies them standard health and safety protections provided to every other segment of society. Allow me to elaborate:

HB 4950—removes abortion clinic licensing and reporting requirements by repealing MCL 333.20115 and 333.22224, which require abortion clinics to be licensed as surgical outpatient facilities. Standard licensing for these facilities include basic safety measures, such as filing copies of the floor plan for use by emergency services to ensure patient safety.¹ According to the National Institute for Health’s National Center for Biotechnology Information, procedures like surgical abortions typically involve the use of anesthesia, which involves many risks, while the procedure itself may result in any number of primary types of outcomes, including: excessive blood loss, uterine perforation, cervical injury, rehospitalization, and/or death.² While these outcomes may not be widespread, they do happen. Wouldn’t you like to know that your daughter is just as safe and well protected at a reproductive clinic as your son is at the dentist during an oral surgery? Repealing these commonsense safety measures put women at risk.

The bills of the RHA also repeal informed consent for patients seeking an abortion. Given the previously mentioned risks and the reported casualties of patients using abortion pills, patient knowledge about the various procedures and risks should be a non-negotiable, just as it is in all fields of medical practice. Rather than removing informed consent and coercion screening, the legislature should protect a woman’s right to know.

HB 4951, HB 4952, HB 4953, HB4954, & HB 4958—repeal the laws protecting the lives of children born alive during botched abortion procedures along with common sense health and safety standards protecting the mother. While thoughts may differ on when life begins, once a person is born, they are clearly entitled to EQUAL government protection under the law (14th Amendment). To do less to save the life of a person

¹ <https://www.michigan.gov/lara/-/media/Project/Websites/lara/bchs/Folder1/SLACR-ver-03-2023-Change-in-Signature-Line.pdf?rev=70f90a19febc44b184c64632cba509cf&hash=499CD17C6390DDEDFC746D0754B41750>

² National Institute for Health’s National Center for Biotechnology Information;
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8407039/>

because of their age, desirability, or gender is barbaric discrimination of the worst kind. Newborn citizens and pregnant women are all created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). Their life has inherent worth and dignity, and they deserve the best medical and humanitarian care we can provide—without exception.

HB 4957—revises the “Pregnant and Parenting Student Act” to allow on-campus parenting services to provide abortion referrals *instead* of parental resources. This provides the opposite of what parenting clients are looking for. For a pregnant student seeking support to complete her education while becoming a mother, this type of pressure to abort can make her feel coerced, like she has only one choice. The legislature should take steps to empower female students who want to be mothers with real tools for success, rather than trying to guide their decision in the opposite direction.

HB 4958, HB 4959 — eliminate the legal barrier which prevents taxpayer dollars from funding elective abortions. When the measure was last before Michigan voters, the message was loud and clear: taxpayer funds should not pay for elective abortions. This policy further serves as an egregious affront to the sacred conscience of citizens whose religious convictions teach that the destruction of innocent human life is wrong.

HB 4955 — repeals the law requiring humane disposal of fetal remains. The laws currently on the books protect the sanitation workers and larger communities from handling unsanitary blood and body parts. By repealing this law, the legislature is exposing sanitation workers and citizens to bloodborne pathogens and other medical risks, while simultaneously devaluing the dignity of humankind.

HB 4949 — codifies the language of Proposal 3 of 2022 into law, allowing for the implementation of abortions through birth, including infanticide and partial birth abortion, repealing the “Insurance Opt Out”, and avoiding consideration of common-sense regulations authorized in section 3(c). The bill, which purports to create a constitutional right for all people regardless of age, fails to deal with other conflicting laws already on the books, putting all levels of government in an impossible situation of choosing which law to uphold and which law to violate. This poorly crafted public policy is the antithesis of good governance and the rule of law.

Conclusion

The “Reproductive Health Act” needlessly and recklessly endangers women by denying them standardized medical care. It prioritizes the profits of groups like Planned Parenthood over the protection of women. It devalues the dignity of human life. It disregards the conscience and expressed will of Michiganders. It creates policies devoid of compassion. The “Reproductive Health Act” is bad public policy and I urge you to join me in opposing this dangerous and destructive legislation.

Questions to Consider Before Action

If Michigan repeals the licensing requirements, reporting requirements, and all the other measures before this body today concerning reproductive care, what laws will remain in Michigan to ensure that abortion is safe for women? What laws will allow the state of Michigan to prosecute those who may prey on women seeking abortion?

If the state is willing to pay whatever the market rate is for the cost of abortion, why is the state unwilling to spend the money to ensure that abortions take place in surgically licensed facilities? (HB 4958-4959)

Don't women seeking abortion deserve the same standard of care as other patient seeking outpatient surgery?

What measures of accountability and transparency are you putting in place to measure safety improvements within the reproductive health industry?

Can you clarify the age when a person becomes entitled to equal protection under the law from the state of Michigan, in accordance with 14th amendment?