

Joint Senate Judiciary and House Federal and State Affairs Committee

SCR 1613 and HCR 5019

The Value Them Both Constitutional Amendment for Life

Jeanette Pryor, Kansas Catholic Conference

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Chair Barker and Chair Wilborn, members of the Committee,

My name is Jeanette Pryor and I am the Policy Specialist for the Kansas Catholic Conference, representing the four Bishops and Dioceses of Kansas. On their behalf, I would like to thank you for this opportunity to advocate for the Value Them Both Amendment of our State Constitution to protect vulnerable pregnant mothers and their growing babies.

On April 26, 2019, the Supreme Court of Kansas issued its ruling in the case of *Hodes and Nauser MDs, P.A. v. Schmidt* containing their discovery, in the 1859 Constitution, of a woman's "fundamental right" to end the life of her preborn baby.

The Bishops of Kansas join thousands of your constituents who have already signed the Catholic Petition for Life circulating in 285 parishes across Kansas. We respectfully ask that you enable Kansas voters to reverse the Hodes ruling by placing the Value Them Both Amendment on the ballot in 2020.

Kansas mothers and babies currently benefit from a robust body of reasonable pro-life laws, each deliberated by our elected representatives. These sensible regulations are at risk of being eliminated, the legal basis for these laws having been evacuated by the Court. Virtually no limits will remain on abortions offered in Kansas, including last-minute surgeries and live dismemberments of non-anesthetized infants in the womb, many potentially paid for with State tax dollars.

We would like to call your attention to Kansas Statutes 65-6704,05: Abortion upon a minor, required information and counseling, and abortion upon a minor, written consent of certain persons and waiver of consent.

Currently, an abortion provider who wishes to perform surgery or offer chemical abortifacients to a child under the age of 18 must obtain written proof of parental consent. This law was enacted with strong bi-partisan support. It also outlines the process by which children who believe obtaining parental consent would be prejudicial or harmful may obtain a judicial waiver at no cost to themselves.

Parents have a natural, legal and universally recognized duty and privilege to protect, nurture and guide their daughters as they grow into independence. Our laws demand that no one, no educator, representative of a religious or financial institution, a coach or even non-emergent healthcare provider, professionally interact or contract with our child without our express consent.

If Kansas legislators do not help reverse the Court's ruling, even this most rudimentary and obvious protection of our young vulnerable girls will be deemed unconstitutional. Complete strangers, strangers with a deep financial and ideological interests in selling their services will have full access to our daughters without any obligation to inform us so we can make sure the best medical and emotional needs of our child are being met.

Instead of her own pediatrician, who cannot legally take our child's temperature without our consent, a paid itinerant provider may be the only adult to counsel her.

Opponents of an amendment and, consequently parental consent laws, are not there to support our daughters emotionally after they send them home from the clinic. Mandatory post-abortion counseling for those who need help is included in the law, but vigorously opposed by the abortion industry.

I ask you to protect the parental consent laws that many of you helped put in place by supporting the Value Them Both Amendment in 2020.

Thank you