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Testimony: House Federal & State Affairs and Senate Judiciary Committees

Opposing HCR 5019 and SCR 1613

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Thank you for the opportunity for me to share the stories of my patients, the women of Kansas.

Everyone agrees that in a perfect world, there would be no abortion. No one would get pregnant unintentionally, there would be no rape, no one would face the choice of ending a pregnancy or losing their own life, and no one would ever hear the news that their baby had a terminal diagnosis and could not survive.

Last year I faced the heartbreaking task of calling a patient to tell her that the baby she and her husband were so excitedly expecting had a fatal genetic disorder and would not survive after birth. She was devastated and we cried together. Then we were able to discuss options, and, in the end, she exercised her right to choose how she could best care for herself and her pregnancy. She elected to terminate. She is happily now expecting again and so far, the pregnancy has been uncomplicated. This is by no means an anomaly, every OB/GYN you talk to can tell you stories about how abortion has been a therapeutic medical intervention for a patient. We have faced situations where legal restrictions to terminating pregnancy has put a mother's life at risk. We had a patient at a local hospital recently who unfortunately, was diagnosed with the early rupture of her amniotic sac. Meaning her water had broken before she was even half way through her pregnancy. She began to develop an infection. She had children at home. The expertise of every doctor consulted was that the likelihood of this baby to survive was zero and the longer she stayed pregnant the more likely she was to die of this spreading infection. Instead of the doctors and the patient deciding what was the safest for her, they were calling lawyers to find out if they were breaking the law by trying to save her life.

The reality is that abortion is a necessary medical procedure for these women and others with life stories that we may never know. And it is every woman's fundamental right to seek out medical care when they are pregnant. A constitutional amendment that would apply to a select group of people and a single medical procedure is an extreme form of discrimination and interferes with the doctor patient relationship.

As a medical procedure, regulations regarding abortion should be, in fact they currently are made by medical providers and regulatory organizations. The decision on when, how and for whom an abortion can be provided should be made in the exam room, not on the legislative floor.

Please continue to allow us to provide the best care we can for our patients and allow them to make the decision that is right for them and their families.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Tara Chettiar, MD