

Abortion Restrictions for Young People

By Sen. Kelli Stargel and Rep. Erin Grall
SB 1774 / HB 1335



SB 1774/HB 1335 would require teens to obtain parental consent prior to receiving an abortion. Most teens already seek the counsel of their parent or guardian when it comes to a decision like this. If they don't, there's usually a good reason. That's why leading health and medical professionals oppose these laws. And requiring this burdensome restriction will impact young people who already face obstacles to accessing care. Parents want to be involved in their teenagers' lives but good family communication can't be imposed by politicians. Our first priority must be to keep our teens safe. This legislation would have the opposite effect.

Putting at risk teens in further jeopardy

When faced with an unplanned pregnancy, most young people voluntarily disclose it to a parent or other trusted adult, like a family member or teacher. Teens who have a supportive relationship with parents are likely to consult them about an abortion decision but not all young people are fortunate enough to have a healthy relationship with their parents. Those who do not share it with parents usually have a good reason. This legislation puts those vulnerable teenagers – those who most need protection – in harm's way, or forces them to go to court. These teens don't need a judge, they need a counselor.

According to the Guttmacher Institute, 90 percent of 14-year-olds and 74 percent of 15-year-olds surveyed said they involved at least one parent or guardian in their abortion decision. Those young people who didn't cited that they were worried that they may be thrown out or experience other abuse by their guardian.

One study found that of the young people who do not seek advice from parents, nearly half—45 percent—experience significant negative consequences when a parent finds out about pregnancy, from punishment to abuse to being forced to leave the home.

Opposed by medical professionals

It should come as no surprise that health care professionals from the American Medical Association, the Society for Adolescent Medicine, the American Public Health Association, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and other organizations of health professionals oppose mandatory parental involvement in abortion decision making.

The American Medical Association recognizes that requiring parental involvement when youth seek sensitive health services can be counterproductive. The Society of Adolescent Medicine recommends adolescents be allowed to give consent for all or some types of health care and to have their confidentiality protected in the provision of that care, and the American Academy of Family Physicians agrees it is essential that adolescents have access to confidential health care.

Barriers to care

When young people are unable to consent to their own health care or feel secure in that care being confidential their care may be delayed, forgone, or even denied by parents, guardians or others. This legislation will further delay access, which leads to more invasive, expensive and harder to access later-term abortions.