

Kansas House Committee on Federal and State Affairs

HCR 5003 Value Them Both Amendment for Life

Erin Keeley, PA-C Kearny County Hospital PROPONENT

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Dear Chairman Barker and Members of the House Committee on Federal and State Affairs,

Thank you very much for the opportunity to share my support of the Value Them Both Amendment. I am a Physician Assistant practicing rural family medicine with obstetrics at a rural county hospital in southwest Kansas. I provide prenatal and gynecologic care and deliver babies as a regular part of my practice, and am very passionate about protecting the health and rights of women and children in our community and state. I also volunteer at our local pregnancy resource center and interact regularly with women navigating unplanned pregnancies.

The Value Them Both Amendment is aptly named. I strongly support it for two reasons: its impact on the health of our Kansan women, and its impact on the health of our Kansan children. Firstly, the current situation after the Supreme Court ruling in *Hodes and Nauser vs. Schmidt* is dangerous to the health of women. It leaves no constitutional protection for the ability to regulate clinics providing abortion services in the same way that other outpatient surgery centers are regulated. Abortion procedures, especially in the second and third trimesters, carry significant risk of complications such as infection or hemorrhage that can be serious and sometimes life-threatening. It is extremely unsafe to remove the accountability standards for safety and informed consent that are required of every other medical facility in the state. Additionally, in the current situation, minor pregnant teenage women may be accessing services at these centers without parental knowledge and with no assurance of adequate counseling on alternative options and informed consent. These teenage women are especially vulnerable and need assurance of adequate education and safety measures to prevent complications. Medicine without accountability is dangerous in any setting, and is unthinkable regarding any other procedure in my profession. Additionally, without the ability to place gestational age limits on abortion procedures, more risky and dangerous procedures with higher complication risks will be performed on women more frequently. Even strong proponents of abortion would typically advocate for “keeping abortion safe and rare”, and the current situation will make abortion less safe and more common, posing a significant risk to the health of women. These concerns are compelling without even mentioning the well documented knowledge that women who have undergone abortion procedures experience not only risk to their physical health, but significantly higher rates of depression and abortion specific post traumatic stress disorder as well. We need to have regulatory measures in place to ensure that women receive information about the abortion-associated risks they are assuming, so that they can make informed decisions about their health. To do less than this is unjust- it degrades the dignity and autonomy of the woman.

Equally importantly, the current situation threatens the health of our Kansan children. It is well documented that unborn children feel pain and have emotion. The Kansas Constitution affirms the rights of its citizens to “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” Allowing abortion

without term limits will result not only in the loss of life for many unborn children- their fundamental human and constitutional right- but also will subject them to procedures that are painful, traumatic and unjust. The dilation and evacuation procedure primarily used for abortion after the first trimester involves forcibly removing a live fetus from the womb with forceps and suction, sometimes in pieces. If the fetus is past a certain gestational age, an injection is often given to stop the fetal heartbeat prior to the procedure. This is formally called “feticide.” We would never allow “infanticide,” but the words, and the stripping of the right to life from a living human, are eerily and undeniably similar. It is difficult to say that a child does not have the right to life the day before it is born, if we have any respect for the dignity of that child’s life the day after it is born. In our current situation, abortion could be performed up until the moment of birth.

Both our women and our children deserve better medical care and greater protection of their lives and dignity than we are currently giving them. We desperately need to value them both. For these reasons, I strongly urge your support of the proposed constitutional amendment. Thank you once again for your time and attention to these important concerns, and for the opportunity to express my support for this amendment as a local Kansan healthcare provider. Thank you in advance for advocating for the women and children in our community.

Sincerely,

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