



TO: John Barker, Chair
House Federal and State Affairs Committee

FROM: Don King
Senior Vice President, Ascension
Kansas Ministry Market Executive
Ascension Via Christi

SUBJECT: Testimony in support of HCR 5003

DATE: January 15, 2021

Chairman Barker and members of the committee, thank you for allowing Ascension Via Christi to provide this testimony in support of HCR 5003, the Value Them Both Amendment.

For more than 130 years Ascension Via Christi has provided compassionate care to vulnerable members of the Kansas community. Our mission calls us to serve “all persons with special attention to those who are poor and vulnerable,” which is why we have fought so hard for Medicaid expansion since passage of the Affordable Care Act.

All Kansans deserve access to affordable, accessible healthcare. Importantly, we are committed to advocating for policies that protect the vulnerable, including the hungry, destitute, homeless, refugee, and especially, unborn.

In April 2019, the Supreme Court made an unfortunate decision in *Hodes & Nouser v. Schmidt* creating a state constitutional right to abortion. The Court asserted that the Kansas Constitution protects the right to abortion more expansively than the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution.

This newfound right, not explicitly in the constitution, begs some unfortunate questions: Is there a constitutional right for state government to provide the means to obtain one? If so, do Kansans want state tax dollars used to fund abortion? Are providers required to provide or make referrals for abortions if doing so violates the tenets of their faith?

Our state’s founders contemplated that we would at times need to turn to the people for answers to such questions. For that reason, they established an amendment process, which requires a two-thirds majority vote by the Legislature.



Given the strong feelings of many Kansans on this topic, it is only appropriate that they have a say by getting to vote on an amendment that would answer these questions.

As we move into the 2021 legislative session, we encourage House and Senate members to give Kansans the opportunity to vote on HCR 5003, which adds a new section that there is no constitutional right to abortion and provides our citizens the ability to regulate abortion through their elected representatives.

Kansans need to make the consequential decision as to how we demonstrate our support for mothers and their children, born and unborn. As an advocate for a more compassionate and just society, we believe this constitutional amendment is an important step in that direction, therefore ask you to support the passage of HCR 5003.