



PO BOX 8453, COLUMBIA, SC, 29202, (803) 636-0431, WWW.LWVSC.ORG

TESTIMONY: S. 1 SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE SENATE MEDICAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

January 8, 2021

S. 1 would ban abortion after detection of a “fetal heartbeat” with the exception of medical emergencies. The bill thus would violate the constitutional right to privacy as interpreted in *Roe v. Wade* and other federal court decisions.

The national position of the League of Women Voters with respect to reproductive choice is as follows:

The League of Women Voters believes public policy in a pluralistic society must affirm the constitutional right of privacy of the individual to make reproductive choices.

Given this pluralistic society, it should not be surprising that S.1 is contrary to the views of a majority of South Carolinians. Winthrop Poll results in 2019 show that at least 73% of South Carolinians support substantially greater rights to terminate pregnancies than are provided in this bill.¹

Also testifying to our pluralistic society, America’s religious groups are not united in their beliefs on abortion and are certainly not united in asking the state to intervene in this decision. For one example among many, the Episcopal Church explicitly opposes any federal or state action that would abridge or deny the right of individuals to reach informed decisions about continuation of their pregnancies and to act upon them as their conscience dictates.²

There is a broader ethical perspective on this issue and again S.1 fails to measure up. The supporters of S.1 are effectively making a claim that people have an obligation to give up bodily autonomy when their body is needed to sustain another (whether one considers an embryo or fetus a “person” or not), so long as doing so doesn’t cause irreparable physical harm. This could be equated with mandatory organ donation, a state-mandated loss of bodily autonomy in support of other individuals. However, there is no consensus in our society in support of this principle. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) recognize this in their discussion of donation of organs from the dead.³ The NIH documents that even for deceased individuals, ethical consensus supports great respect for bodily autonomy and personal dignity that outweighs a government mandate for organ donation, even if needed to sustain someone’s life. NIH adheres to this ethical position although, as stated on their website, “lethal shortage remains the reality.” S.1 would deny pregnant persons that autonomy and that dignity.

The State of South Carolina must recognize the constitutionally protected right of privacy of the individual and must not intrude on the moral and religious liberty and personal dignity of its citizens. This bill must be rejected.

Contact: Lynn Shuler Teague, Vice President for Issues and Action, LWVSC
803 556-9802 TeagueLynn@gmail.com

¹ <https://www.winthrop.edu/uploadedFiles/wupoll/february-2019-results.pdf>

² General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, New Orleans, 1982* (New York: General Convention, 1983), p. C-156.

³ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5088084/>