



Kansas House Federal and State Affairs Committee
9:00 AM, Room 346 -S
Testimony in Opposition to a Proposed Constitutional Amendment regarding Abortion
Julie Burkhart, Trust Women
Tuesday, 15 January 2021

Dear Chairman Barker and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in opposition to HCR 5003.

My name is Julie Burkhart and I am the founder and CEO of Trust Women. Trust Women opens clinics that provide abortion services in underserved communities. We are the only provider of procedural and medication abortion services outside the Kansas City area. 50% of our patient population comes from outside the Sedgwick County metropolitan area. Therefore, we serve hundreds, thousands of patients who come from all over the state of Kansas.

Kansas politicians who crafted HCR 5003 want to substitute their will for a woman's right to decide, in consultation with her family, her faith and her doctor, whether she has an abortion or not. They want to put Kansas women's rights and health up for a vote of the people. Let's make no mistake about this. Let's call it what it is - it's the first step in passing an all-out ban on abortion in Kansas. And this is where politicians', right here under the dome, are clearly out of step with the voters of this great state.

One statistic that I think is important is that 70% of our patients are already moms. I can't tell you how many times I've heard a woman explain to me that she's decided to have an abortion because she wants the children she already has to have a good life and she wants to be her best for them.

Something I have learned in all my years working in abortion care - is that each woman's story is unique and each decision that is made, is thoughtful and well-considered. Women really do know what is best for each and every pregnancy - whether it's carrying a pregnancy to term or deciding to have an abortion.

We have canvassed door-to-door across Kansas - in urban neighborhoods and in rural communities - talking with your constituents about reproductive health care. One common thread, no matter where we go, are the abortion stories we hear on Kansans doorsteps. The reality is that abortion touches the lives of all people. One out of four women, by the time they are in their mid-40's will have had an abortion. Therefore, it's safe to assume that we all know women who have had abortions - it's just that no one is talking about it.

One thing that I think we can all agree on in this room today, is that we all have different opinions on abortion. This is exactly why I am here today, testifying in opposition to this flawed amendment. What we can also appreciate, collectively, is our independent spirit and that it's important to us that our fellow citizens live their lives as they see fit - making



critical decisions that are best suited for their own lives. This extends to women who are only trying to make the best possible decision with each pregnancy.

How can a proposal to amend the constitution of the State of Kansas be helpful to the citizens of Kansas, when it clearly seeks to deny women the right to make their own decisions about their health care? This amendment would pit the state against women.

This amendment would put the health of Kansas women in danger. Do we really want the State of Kansas to get into the business of putting women in harm's way? Do we want the State of Kansas to get into the business of jeopardizing the wellbeing of our mothers, our daughters, our sisters, our friends? I know I certainly don't.

Please consider the real consequences of this proposed amendment on the lives of women.

Lastly, the Kansas Legislature could affirm the right to life for everyone in Kansas, by enacting these following policies, which would do more for our citizens than banning abortion:

1. Expand Medicaid so that more Kansans might receive quality health care. This would affect the lives of at least 165,000 people. And this is especially important for people who lack resources.
2. Work to eradicate maternal and infant mortality and change inequitable policies - some of our Kansas neighborhoods have the nation's highest mortality rates. Black women are [three times more likely to die from pregnancy](#) than white women, according to the Centers for Disease Control, and Native American women face a two and a half times higher risk of death than white women. We need to work to balance the scales so that all women, no matter race, have quality health care.
3. Work to ensure that all forms of contraception are widely available - especially for people who, once again, have limited resources.

These are three specific recommendations that would help women and families lead healthier lives and would improve our health care delivery system. The truth is that even if politicians interfere with women's health care, it will not erase abortion from the fabric of society. By honoring women's health and rights, we will then create a society where women and families are healthier because all of the choices before them are respected.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alex G. B. Stewart', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Founder and CEO