

TESTIMONY OF MISSOURI RIGHT TO LIFE IN SUPPORT OF SB 792

February 15, 2010

SB 792 would mandate that the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services collect and publish more detailed statistics on the methods of abortion and the ages of the unborn who are aborted. It would also tighten the law on the confidentiality of abortion records.

The current statistical reports of the Department of Health contain seven categories (curettage, intrauterine installation, hysterotomy/hysterectomy, laminaria D & E, medical nonsurgical, other, and unknown), most of which are so vague that it is impossible to determine what procedures are actually being used. For example, the vast majority of abortions are classified as “curettage” abortions in the Department’s annual report. (See the 2008 report –the latest available–entitled “Resident Abortions By Race, Hispanic Origin, Age of Woman and Type Of Procedure by Weeks Of Gestation: Missouri 2008.”) This fails to differentiate between suction abortions, in which a curette may be used to scrape the uterine wall after the suction device has done its work, and D & C abortions, in which the unborn baby’s body is literally sliced apart by a curette, then removed. Another category, “intrauterine instillation,” presumably refers to an old abortion method, the injection of a toxic saline solution into the womb. The method is now so rare that the number of such abortions has been “zero” for several years. A third category, “laminaria D & E”, is quite confusing, because the use of laminaria is not limited to the D & E procedure. The reader is left to wonder whether some abortions that would not be classified as D & E abortions land in that category only because laminaria are used or whether that category includes partial birth abortions. The Federal ban on partial birth abortions became effective after the Supreme Court ruled that it was constitutional in 2007.

The bill would also provide information on the reasons that women themselves identify for seeking an abortion. While the circumstances and stresses in which the statements are collected must be taken into account, the collection of this information may well prove useful in the state’s funding of programs to provide alternatives to abortion. If the reasons for abortion that

are stated in the report can be relied upon, then the state will build a useful store of information for more effective policies that assist in the state's goal of preferring childbirth over abortion.

Finally, the bill would not only provide that information on the identities of women, abortionists, and the abortion facilities could not be kept, but would also provide significant strengthening of the confidentiality that now is required of medical records in connection with abortion. For example, the penalty for intentional violations of the confidentiality provisions would be increased from a misdemeanor to a felony.

For all of these reasons, Missouri Right to Life supports SB 792.