

**TESTIMONY OF MISSOURI RIGHT TO LIFE
IN SUPPORT OF HB 1613
BEFORE THE HOUSE CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES COMMITTEE
April 8, 2014**

Currently, Missouri law requires 24 hours reflection period prior to an abortion. Twenty-four hours prior to an abortion a woman must receive, in person in the same room with the physician, the following information: the risks of abortion, information on gestational age and development of the child, information on alternative to abortion programs and information about the responsibilities of the father.

HB 1613 seeks to expand the 24 hour reflection period to 72 hours.

The Joint Opinion of Justices O'Connor, Kennedy, and Souter in the Casey case, recognizes that a state has a legitimate interest in enacting informed consent legislation:

In attempting to ensure that a woman apprehend the full consequences of her decision, the State furthers the legitimate purpose of reducing the risk that a woman may elect an abortion, only to discover later, with devastating psychological consequences, that her decision was not fully informed. If the information the State requires to be made available to the woman is truthful and not misleading, the requirement may be permissible.

This bill is good policy. The decision whether to have an abortion is a traumatic one. It is not made better by ignorance. As many women realize, the issue is complicated. Many women who undergo abortions face years of psychological pain and turmoil and too many women experience physical problems. A woman needs to be aware that abortion is not an escape from her problems. Often it compounds them.

Women also need to be aware that carrying a child to term need not lead to a life of poverty or misery. There are legal and social remedies that, when the woman is made aware of them, might solve many of the mother's immediate concerns and save her from a decision she would later regret. A little more time, from 24 to 72 hours, gives a woman time to contemplate a life-changing decision that she will live with for the rest of her life.

Informed consent legislation is not an attack on personal freedom, but a guarantee of it. It is constitutional. It safeguards a woman's right to know and to make informed decisions. It is a reasoned and compassionate response to the needs of concerned pregnant women. It is good legislation.

In conclusion, Missouri Right to Life urges you to take up and pass the expansion of the woman's right to know act in HB 1613.