

Senate Finance Committee

3 East

Miller Senate Office Building

Annapolis, Maryland 21401

March 16, 2022

Greetings Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members,

For the record, my name is Michelle Talkington, and I am a proud mother of six children. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak in support of Senate Bill 891- Public Health – Medical Procedures – Parent or Guardian Notice (Maryland Parental Involvement Enhancement Act). This Bill will ensure the very basic rights of parents and guardians of children of our great state, and is my strong desire that you give it a favorable report.

I am the mother of six children, three sons and three daughters. From the day that I delivered each one, I knew that I would do all that I could to raise, care for, and protect them through to adulthood. At the core of the issue in SB891 is the question of whether these are my children? At what point is a child “an adult” capable of making permanent life altering medical decisions without notice to their parents?

As parents, guardians, and concerned adults, we witnessed SB41 alter the minimum age of a minor consent to consultation, diagnosis, and treatment of a mental or emotional disorder by a healthcare provider, from 16 to 12. I have raised three of my children past the age of 12 and I can assure you that they are extremely different in their personalities and cognitive abilities. It is frightening to consider this ever being applied to other non-emergency medical treatments, especially as dangerous or life-altering as an abortion.

I want to share two of my personal experiences to better illustrate the importance of establishing SB891 as to requiring parental notification with stipulations provided. As a mother, I sought treatment from a well-known medical HMO establishment to address feminine issues that my oldest daughter experienced. Her condition was uncomfortable, but we took the word of the Doctor as to her treatment. After the first treatment failed, we listened to the Doctor, and attempt it again with another medication. Following the increased pain that my child experienced after the second appointment, I challenged the Doctor in their knowledge of the issue and sought another opinion. The new physician treated my child appropriately and noted that the previous Doctor misdiagnosed the issue and gave medication that in fact made it worse. As a parent I was angry and relieved to get my child the help she needed. What I must emphasize is that as an Adult, I knew to ask the right questions, I knew that I could challenge the opinion of the authority who was in front of me. This happened on my watch, what could have happened if I were not even made aware? Would my daughter have long-term complications? A teenager, or younger child will not have that knowledge, instinct, our courage to take the action that a parent or guardian would take to ensure their wellbeing.

I have been on the other side of SB891 when, at the age of 16, I found myself pregnant in a situation where neither of my parents lived in the state that I resided in. I understand, first-hand, the thoughts and emotions that run through a young woman’s mind when faced with extraordinary circumstances. It was critical that I spoke to an adult who knew my personality, my circumstances, my medical conditions, and all that typically comes with being a parent or guardian. My mother was made aware, and I was able to discuss my options with the person who would ensure that my physical and emotional needs were met. I want to remind you all that parents, not physicians, are responsible for their children before and after they leave the medical facility. If we

are not made aware, how then can we be held responsible for the consequences that may follow. If we are not made aware, as parents, who do we go to as recourse if a tragic mistake is made when the State or Physician acts as the temporary guardian without our consent? I am my child's first line of defense. We, as parents are the ones accountable, so please ensure that we have that option. Once Again, I ask you to consider are these our children?

Respectfully, I ask you for a favorable report of SB891.