
March 16, 2023

HB 973 - UNFAVORABLE

Health - Abortion - Ultrasound and Waiting Period

Dear Chair Pena-Melnyk, Vice-Chair Cullison, and Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee,

Laws requiring that an abortion patient be offered the opportunity to view the ultrasound results could be consistent with both the medical evidence on ultrasound viewing in abortion care and ethical medical practice, but laws such as this that also mandate a 24 hour period are not. Waiting periods are medically unnecessary. They introduce an unnecessary hurdle to obtaining medical care and intrude on the patient-provider relationship, while failing to protect the best interests of the patient. These types of provisions mean that women must make two trips to a health care provider in order to obtain an abortion. Making two trips can pose a burden for women who need to arrange for time off from work or caretaking duties. The need to gather funds or make travel arrangements may lead women to have later abortions, which are more expensive and can pose a higher risk. Absent a substantial public health justification, government should not interfere with individual patient-physician encounters.

Also, the use of the phrase “fetal heartbeat” in this bill is misleading and exhibits a bias. A flutter that is detectable by sophisticated ultrasound technology in embryos around six weeks after conception occurs because the group of cells that will become the future pacemaker of the heart gained the capacity to fire electrical signals. At eight weeks the embryo officially becomes a fetus. The muscle continues to develop over the next four to six weeks, undergoing the folding and bending that needs to happen for the heart to take its final shape.