

February 5, 2021

To: Montana Senate Judiciary Committee

From: Darbi Courtney, RN on behalf of the Montana Catholic Conference

Re: Testimony in support of HB 140

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Darbi Courtney. I am a registered nurse and I speak today on behalf of the Roman Catholic bishops of Montana.

I am here today to voice our strong support for House Bill 140.

This bill represents a natural extension of our state's interest in ensuring informed consent as it applies to abortion, furthering a legitimate good that persons on both sides of the abortion issue should support.

This bill does not require that an ultrasound be performed before every abortion procedure. It simply requires that a pregnant woman be offered the opportunity to see her unborn child through an ultrasound. By doing so, House Bill 140 empowers her to make a more informed decision about whether or not to continue her pregnancy.

Not all women will choose to view an ultrasound and some who do will choose abortion. However, as someone who has personally performed over 400 ultrasounds, I can attest that countless women, when viewing an ultrasound for the first time, have expressed shock and wonder that they are already able to see the flicker of their unborn child's heartbeat just before 6 weeks gestation. They are surprised to see that their baby already has the ability to move at week 9 or at just 10 weeks they are able to see the silhouetted profile of their baby's body complete with tiny hands and feet. Some of these women leave that experience believing abortion is not the right choice for them and are grateful for having had the opportunity to witness firsthand what was going on within their body at that very moment.

In any number of other medical procedures, women are offered the opportunity to see their sonogram and mammogram images, chest and bone x-rays, etc. Abortion providers should routinely do the same. This bill helps to ensure that ultrasound information, which can help to inform clinical decision-making, is made readily available to every patient. When making such a significant and irreversible medical decision, it is not unreasonable to ensure that a woman has the opportunity to rely on her own mental and sensory perception, without outside bias or interference. Providing pregnant women the option of viewing an ultrasound says that we respect women and their dignity by trusting them with their own medical information. Women deserve nothing less.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify on this important piece of legislation. House Bill 140 helps empower women to make fully informed decisions. What good is having a choice if it is not a fully informed choice?

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, on behalf of the Montana Catholic Conference, I strongly urge a "do concur" and thank you for your time.