Re: Veto SF 471

Dear Governor Branstad:

As health-care professionals serving women, girls, and families in our state, we urge you to veto SF 471. This legislation represents unwise and unsafe political intrusion in the practice of medicine in Iowa, and its consequences would be grave.

**SF471 is reckless and ill-advised.**

By banning abortions after 20 weeks, especially without clear exceptions that protect women, SF 471 ties the hands of doctors seeking to help women and their loved ones. Its asserted exceptions are so narrow that it would force women to risk their health or carry pregnancies that are fatal. Some fetal anomalies cannot be confirmed by ultrasound before 20 weeks. Under SF 471, women receiving an uncertain diagnosis would face an agonizing decision: choose pregnancy termination earlier, before an ultrasound confirmation, or wait for confirmation, and then have no choice at all. It is bad medicine, and would undoubtedly place ob-gyns in the unconscionable position of having to watch our patients and their loved ones undergo additional emotional trauma, illness, and suffering during what is already a difficult, even tragic, time.

SF 471 also adds obstacles to all abortion care, including forcing physicians to give women inaccurate medical information and imposing a mandatory 72-hour waiting period before they can access care. This would deprive women of accurate and unbiased information about their health care options, violate the principles of informed consent, and make access to safe abortion services even more burdensome to a woman at a time when she needs empathetic, respectful care.

**SF 471 is dangerous political interference in the practice of medicine.**

The sanctity of the patient-physician relationship is central to good medicine, a critical tenet embraced by ACOG and many other medical societies, including the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Academy of Family Physicians, the American College of Surgeons, the American College of Physicians, and the American Medical Association. SF 471 would irreparably compromise the integrity of the patient-physician relationship, taking medical decisions out of the hands of patients and their physicians and putting them into the hands of politicians. Science, not politics, should be the foundation of medical decision-making.
Proponents of SF 471 have made it clear that this legislation is as much about interfering with the practice of medicine and the relationship a patient has with her physician as it is about restricting women’s access to abortion. Over the course of its debate, legislators offered numerous amendments to SF 471 taking aim at many aspects of patient care, none of which were based on medical evidence or sound science, and many of which were adopted regardless.

**The health of Iowa women and families is at risk.**

The most effective way to reduce abortions is not to make them illegal or highly restricted, but to prevent unintended pregnancy in the first place by improving access to consistent, effective, and affordable contraception. Ironically, many who support SF 471 also support ending funding for many of our state’s qualified family planning providers and clinics, efforts that would deprive Iowa women not only of access to contraceptives that could reduce unintended pregnancy, but also to other critical preventive services like cancer screening.

As health professionals, we strive to pursue and maintain the highest standards of excellence in health care and work every day to provide quality, evidenced-based care to all our patients. We respectfully urge you to veto SF 471. The consequences are grave. We urge you to consider all of the ramifications of this legislation and veto this dramatic interference in medical practice and the patient-physician relationship.

Thank you.

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