

April 26, 2016



Dear State of Michigan Senator:

The American Association of University Women of Michigan **opposes SB 564 and 565** scheduled for third reading on your agenda Wednesday, April 27, 2016.

These bills would establish unreasonable barriers to transporting donated fetal tissue for research. The current language would make it a 5-year felony for paying medical waste companies to transport donated fetal tissue to research labs. Fetal tissue research has led to life-saving vaccines and treatments for polio, measles, shingles, rabies, and Hepatitis A, among many other diseases and conditions. Just last month, [fetal tissue research findings](#) on the Zika virus were published. In fact, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recognizes the value of fetal tissue as a “critical resource” for lifesaving research for many diseases and debilitating conditions.

In the Senate Oversight Committee hearing, the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the University of Michigan, Dr. Steven Rapundalo of MichBio, the ACLU of Michigan, Planned Parenthood and others opposed the bills.

According to the recent Guttmacher Institute article *Fetal Tissue Research: A Weapon and a Casualty in the War Against Abortion* (Guttmacher Policy Review, 2016, Volume 19, Number 1):

- Medical research using human fetal tissue obtained from abortions has benefited millions of people worldwide and holds great promise for the continued advancement of basic science, as well as for the development of lifesaving vaccines and therapies.
- Since 1973, when abortion became legal nationwide, fetal tissue research has, time and again, become entangled in the abortion controversy. The current controversy—set off by a series of heavily edited and misleading videos—grew out of abortion opponents’ long-standing campaign to vilify abortion and abortion providers, and it now threatens fetal tissue research itself.
- Fetal tissue research dates back to the 1930s, and has led to major advances in human health, including the virtual elimination of such childhood scourges as polio, measles and rubella in the United States. Today, fetal tissue is being used in the development of vaccines against Ebola and HIV, the study of human development, and efforts to treat and cure conditions and diseases that afflict millions of Americans.
- To ensure it meets the highest ethical standards, fetal tissue research has been subject to stringent laws and regulations for decades. Abortion foes are now accusing health care providers and researchers of violating these laws and ethical standards, in hopes of ending fetal tissue research and undermining the right to abortion.
- These attacks not only threaten sexual and reproductive health and rights, but also pose a threat to the large numbers of people who could benefit from fetal tissue research, given the wide range of conditions that such research might ameliorate. Any impediment to ongoing scientific inquiry in the field caused by the current controversy would have substantial consequences.

These bills are anti-science, extreme, and unneeded. Current law already bans profiting from the sale of fetal tissue and there is no indication that there is a problem in Michigan. The AAUW of Michigan urges the Senate to reject these bills.

The American Association of University Women of Michigan’s goal is to advance equity for women and girls through advocacy, education, philanthropy, and research. The AAUW has a national Public Policy Program that supports quality affordable and accessible health care including reproductive health care and choice in the determination of one’s reproductive life.

Sincerely,

Mary Pollock
Government Relations Coordinator