

Vote on HB 4787 and 4830

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The Michigan House leadership announced Wednesday afternoon that it intends to vote today, Thursday afternoon, on two anti-abortion bills. We need calls or emails to your State Representative to urge a NO vote.

The bills are HB 4787 and 4830. The bills essentially would make it a felony to have pro-choice conversations with pregnant women in Michigan if the conversation met the vague definition of coercion to abort in the bill. There are already civil penalties for coercion to abort in our informed consent law and these bills are unneeded. Right To Life of Michigan has considered these bills a high priority. And they are a test to see if the first termers RTL endorsed will vote yes so RTL can then run some other odious bills. We know most legislators, including anti-choice ones, don't want to have to vote on abortion bills, but there are some anti-abortion zealots in the House always wanting to push the issue.

Take a few minutes right now to find your State Representative at the link. <http://www.house.mi.gov/mhrpublic/> and either call or email her/him. Just say you are a constituent and urge a NO vote on HB 4787 and 4830 on today's agenda with the simple message that coercion to abort is already against the law and the bills are unneeded.

Here is the letter I sent on our behalf a little while ago:

Dear State Representative:

The American Association of University Women of Michigan, in keeping with its national Public Policy Program to support choice in the determination of one's reproductive life and freedom from violence and fear of violence, **opposes HB 4787 and 4830**. The purpose of this letter is to urge you to vote NO on these two bills today.

These bills create a new crime - coercion to convince a pregnant woman to have an abortion against her will – and make it a felony with a variable sentence. These bills or ones very similar to them were pulled from the House agenda in December 2012 during consideration of HB 5711 (now PA 499 of 2012) because **anti-coercion provisions were included in the final omnibus bill**. See MCL 333.17015a *Coercion; screening; protocols; report; availability of publications about violence against women* here.

Other important points to consider:

- In addition to the prohibition in MCL 333.17015a, Michigan's Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act and the federal Pregnancy Discrimination Act protect pregnant women from adverse workplace action based on pregnancy discrimination such as coercion to have an abortion. Make-whole relief, attorney fees and sometimes punitive damages are available if pregnancy discrimination is proven under Michigan law. Even a casual workplace conversation about pregnancy, if taken by a female employee of child-bearing age to be pro-abortion, could result in criminal, not just civil, penalties against the employer if these bills pass. **The criminal penalty provided in these bills is an employer mandate that will threaten business owners in Michigan** and is an **extreme response** when civil penalties already exist.

- Reproductive coercion is a subset of the broader issue of domestic and sexual assault and violence. Neither women nor men should be coerced by another into a decision to get pregnant, continue a pregnancy or terminate a pregnancy. **These bills are one-sided** in that they deal with only coercion to terminate a pregnancy rather than even-handedly covering the whole array of reproductive coercion.
- These bills do not assure sufficiently that freedom of expression is protected for those with whom a pregnant woman consults or tells about her pregnancy. The bills set up employers, parents (especially parents of minors or parents of dependent children with majority status), friends, associates, and medical professionals for criminal prosecution if the pregnant girl or woman considers that the advice given about the option of abortion had a coercive quality or effect on her. The definitions in HB 4787 are overly vague and subjective and will lead to unnecessary prosecutions. **The effect will be to reduce those to whom a woman with an unintended pregnancy can turn for honest help and assistance.**
- Michigan's **existing informed consent law already sufficiently require that a woman's consent to abortion must be given freely and without coercion.** These bills are duplicative and unnecessary. They are just Right To Life of Michigan's attempt to get a scorecard vote for the purpose of fund-raising and endorsements. Don't be fooled into voting Yes when the facts about current law are now known to you.

These bills will make bad law in Michigan and we urge you to vote NO.

Sincerely,

Mary Pollock

Government Relations Coordinator

American Association of University Women of Michigan

Please take action now!

And don't forget to order tickets for **Equal Pay Day on April 12**. At 9 a.m. registration begins for the Issues Briefing (U.S. Rep. Debbie Dingle, Emerge Michigan, a U.S. Department of Labor representative and State Representative Marcia Hovey-Wright are some of the speakers) at the Episcopal Church across the street from the Capitol, followed by a rally at 12:30 p.m. on the Capitol steps in Lansing, MI. The Issues Briefing requires registration since food is included, due April 5, 2016, but the rally is free and open to the public. Wear red on that day!

Mary