

Senator Dianne Feinstein
Statement for Judiciary Committee Hearing on
“The Infant Patient: Ensuring Appropriate Medical Care for Children Born Alive”
February 11, 2020

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

The bill we are considering at today’s hearing addresses the rare instances where an abortion is performed later in pregnancy – when a woman has learned that continuing the pregnancy is a threat to her life, or that her unborn child cannot survive.

This bill would force doctors to use extraordinary measures to keep the child alive, even where doing so is against the doctor’s advice and the family’s wishes.

This bill is harmful and unnecessary. It demands a one-size-fits all approach that ignores the unique circumstances of a pregnancy.

And under this bill, doctors who honor their patient’s wishes could face criminal penalties, including imprisonment.

Today we are going to hear from Erika Christensen who has experienced firsthand the trauma of learning her fetus will not survive. Ms. Christensen will speak to the deeply personal decisions her family had to make under the most difficult of circumstances.

There are a myriad of things that can go terribly wrong during a pregnancy – conditions that threaten a woman’s life or make it impossible for her baby to survive. The decision on what to do in these circumstances should be left to a woman, her family, her physician and her faith advisors – not federal law.

It is simply wrong for politicians to interfere in these deeply personal, and medically complicated, decisions.

This legislation and today's hearing are another part of the effort to undermine a woman's ability to access health care and control her own body.

In 2019 alone, seven states passed laws effectively banning abortion. In addition to these extreme abortion bans, 17 states enacted new restrictions on access to reproductive care.

The Trump administration also continues to attack women's reproductive health. Last year, the Department of Health and Human Services effectively forced Planned Parenthood out of the Title X family planning program, jeopardizing access to reproductive health care for millions of low-income women and families.

These efforts to restrict women's access to care ignore the harsh reality that the United States has the highest maternal mortality rate in the developed world.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, nearly 700 women a year die from pregnancy-related complications. This means that, each decade, 7,000 women in America die as a result of childbirth. Instead of considering controversial bills to restrict abortion, Congress should pursue bipartisan measures to make health care more affordable and accessible.

The privacy right recognized in *Roe* has increased safety, dignity, autonomy, and economic security for women. It has helped young women break the cycle of teenage parenthood. It has allowed women to escape abusive relationships. It has ensured a safe avenue for women facing life-threatening fetal or maternal complications. And it has given all women the right to control their reproductive lives.

I remember the days before *Roe v. Wade* made abortion legal – and therefore safe – and we are not going back. As a Senator I will continue fighting to protect a woman's right to choose.