

Representative Blackburn Testimony:

Thank you –

We all share a desire to see what is best for women and children. We differ on what that would be and how to get there, but I appreciate the opportunity to share my views on your Women's Health Protection Act.

The Women's Health Protection Act is an extraordinarily broad, blunt instrument that through its ranging words would substitute the special interests of the abortion industry for both the well-being of women and the value of human life.

This legislation would jeopardize and nullify hundreds of laws that protect both mothers and their unborn children. Among its many faults, it would render impossible efforts by the states to limit abortions based on the sex of the child, putting a double pressure on women, who are often forced by familial and cultural pressures, to exercise son bias in pregnancy and eliminate a female child.

Furthermore, this legislation sets a dangerous precedent because it would place unconstitutional limits on a state's ability to assure the safety of medical facilities. Abortions, despite their grotesque nature, are medical procedures and should be regulated by the state as such.

By considering this legislation, many of your constituents perceive the Senate as out-of-touch with the consensus opinion in this country. Public opinion polls show time and time again that the American people support limits on abortion. 60% of Americans believe abortion should not be permitted in the second trimester and an overwhelming 80% believe it should never happen in the third. Women hold these convictions at a higher percentage than men, and it is no wonder. We bear life – and we bear the burden when public policies fail to support women at a critical hour.

The Committee would be advised to consider how far this bill would go in reversing and uproot both a long existing and rising consensus. S. 1696 would attack conscience exemptions that have existed since the 1973 abortion decisions. It would bar laws that provide for periods of reflection and consideration before an abortion is chosen – it would even prevent a state from assuring that a physician is physically present when abortion drugs are given, or even that only a physician may perform a surgical abortion. It will make abortion less safe.

What the Senate should be considering today is the Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act which passed the House of Representatives on June 17, 2014 on a bipartisan vote, 228-196. The Pain-Capable Act is a piece of legislation that is supported by the American people, based in science, and filled with compassion. The Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act limits abortions after the 20th week of pregnancy except in instances of rape, incest, or to protect the

life of the mother. Our nation is one of only four countries in the world to allow elective abortion to term, and this legislation would take one small, but vital step to move us closer to international norms.

Polls by Quinnipiac University, the Washington Post, and the Huffington Post have all shown that a strong majority of people support limiting abortion after the 20th week of pregnancy. Quinnipiac University's poll shows that women support a 20-week limit in even greater numbers than men - 60% of women versus just 25% in opposition – that's a 35 point margin.

How much longer can we in Washington keep our heads in the sand and claim to be representing the American people, and specifically women, as we seek to expand the abortion industry?

The opinions of the American public regarding abortion have changed and it is time our laws reflect that change.

The American public was horrified by the crimes committed by Kermit Gosnell, the Philadelphia-based abortionist who ran a dangerous, illegal, and ghastly "clinic." He was tried, and rightly convicted, for the crimes he committed and the deaths he caused in that terrible place. Yet, the legislation before you could be used to validate the acts that placed him behind bars and to invalidate the bipartisan legislation put in place to prevent future Gosnells from preying on the poor and the young.

I find it so curious that this legislation is termed "The Women's Health Protection Act." In my opinion it would more accurately be titled the "Removal of Existing Protections and Safety Measures for Women Undergoing Abortion Act." I would encourage the Committee to hit the pause button and consider the consequences, intended or not, of the legislation before passage.

The Women's Health Protection Act is grossly misnamed legislation that seeks to destroy common ground and defy the will of the American people. Reasonable legislation, like the Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act, would protect the lives of unborn children and safeguard women from exploitation by limit abortions after 20 weeks. We must listen to the wisdom of the American people and indeed people everywhere. I urge the Senate to consider positive and mainstream legislation, like the Pain-Capable Unborn-Child Protection Act and to reject categorically the sweeping and radical proposal that is before this committee today.