



February 18, 2011  
Montana House Judiciary Committee  
Testimony of Vicki Saporta, President and CEO, National Abortion Federation

Thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony in opposition to House Bill 544 on behalf of the members of the National Abortion Federation (NAF). NAF is the professional association of abortion providers in North America. Since 1977, NAF has ensured the safety and high quality of abortion practice with standards of care, protocols, and accredited continuing medical education. NAF represents 400 clinics, hospitals and physicians' offices in the United States, Canada and Mexico City, including facilities in Montana. Our mission is to ensure safe, legal, and accessible abortion care, which promotes health and justice for women.

Members of NAF provide compassionate care for over half the women who choose abortion each year in the United States. All NAF facilities, including our members in Montana, comply with NAF's evidence-based *Clinical Policy Guidelines* (CPGs), which set the standard for quality abortion care in North America.<sup>1</sup> In furtherance of NAF's goal to support the provision of the highest quality care, we fully support a woman's right to accurate and complete information about all issues regarding her reproductive health care.

NAF strongly opposes House Bill 544. This legislation is an unprecedented intrusion into the relationship between health care professionals and their patients. Patient counseling should be based on each patient's individual circumstances. Women in Montana already receive full and accurate counseling and patient education prior to receiving abortion care. Not every risk or benefit of abortion care is appropriate to every woman's circumstances or to her care. This extreme legislation would inappropriately legislate the informed consent process and could force health care providers to give women misleading or inappropriate information based on an almost limitless range of information published in peer-reviewed journals.

Individual women and health care providers, rather than politicians, are in the best position to make treatment decisions based on individual patient circumstances. NAF's CPGs state that obtaining informed consent and assessing that the decision to have an abortion is made freely by the patient are essential parts of abortion care. Our members take into consideration the circumstances of each patient and provide high quality responsive care that reflects the needs of

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<sup>1</sup> NAF's 2011 *Clinical Policy Guidelines*, available at [http://www.prochoice.org/pubs\\_research/publications/downloads/professional\\_education/2011%20CPGs.pdf](http://www.prochoice.org/pubs_research/publications/downloads/professional_education/2011%20CPGs.pdf)

that individual patient. It is inappropriate for the legislature to intrude upon the relationship between a woman and her health care provider.

Furthermore, we strongly disagree with the use of either of our textbooks, *A Clinicians Guide to Medical and Surgical Abortion* and *Management of Unintended and Abnormal Pregnancy: Comprehensive Abortion Care*, as sources of “medically credible risk factors” as defined in HB 544. These textbooks serve as the leading source of comprehensive information related to abortion care for medical professionals. They are not designed to be used by politicians in their efforts to impose extreme biased counseling requirements on health care professionals and make it more difficult for Montana women to access safe, legal abortion care.

Abortion is one of the safest medical procedures provided in the United States. Health care professionals in Montana already provide accurate and complete information to women seeking abortion care. This legislation is extreme and unnecessary, and we strongly urge the committee to reject House Bill 544.

Thank you for your consideration. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

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