HOUSE JUDICIARY
EXHIBIT NO. 1
DATE 4/16/13
BILL NO. HB 521

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee -

My name is Laura d'Esterre- D'ESTERRE - I serve as the Culture of Life Spokesperson for the Montana Catholic Conference which represents the 2 Catholic bishops of Montana in the public policy arena. I have formerly worked at the Florence Crittenton Home here for approximately seven years.

This requirement serves to PROTECT girls - in a number of ways - by vetting out sexual abuse and statutory rape, and warning about medical histories and complications.

Regarding the later, it is highly likely that a teen is not as familiar with their own medical history – or family medical history – as a parent. Family medical history is extremely important in knowing how to best serve an individual. A parent is going to be able to provide a more accurate medical history about their child, than the minor patient would be able to themselves. Furthermore, abortion is a medical procedure. Therefore, a patient's own medical history or hereditary concerns need be accurately disclosed. A parent is better able to do this than a minor, and will be able to do so when consent is required.

If one decides to undergo an abortion, there is also a risk of medical complications. If a young girl goes home after obtaining an abortion, secretly, and experiences complications such as severe cramping or bleeding, this could be attributed to other factors and not be treated in a timely manner, putting her health at risk. Yet if her parent consents to the abortion, they will better know what the problem is and how to obtain expedient treatment for the complications she is experiencing. Even when medical treatment is sought for complications from an abortion provider, it is the parent who is financially responsible for the medical bills that result.

In addition to safeguarding a young girl's health, this bill serves as protection against sexual predators. It ONLY applies to girls age 17 and under. When a young girl or teen obtains an abortion without parental consent - for the sake of her privacy - who does this protect? Surely, not her. Rather, it protects male sexual predators. The requirements of this bill serve as a means – a step – to unveil any abuse that might be occurring. Through consultation with her parent, or another disinterested physician, concerns regarding how she got pregnant and by whom would be disclosed in a discreet manner. A number of circumstances, if not all, that result in such a young girl's pregnancy warrant examination.

A couple of examples include: A male teacher or coach who gets a girl pregnant or when a girl is the victim of sex trafficking or forced prostitution. Today, without this law, a male teacher or coach who gets a girl pregnant via statutory rape or sexual abuse, can easily be covered up because he can take her to obtain an abortion with no accountability. He can drop her off at the

clinic, and she can walk in by herself, and obtain the abortion without the involvement of a parent. To protect him, in instances of statutory rape, or to protect herself from increased abuse, she is not likely to disclose the circumstances that led to her seeking the abortion, and he will be able to continue preying upon and victimizing her.

The example of a victim of sex trafficking or forced prostitution was recently highlighted by private investigations of the facilities of a national abortion provider. These investigations have shown that in a number of states, when a man disclosed he was involved in the sex trade of minors, the abortion provider was willing to aid him by covering up the abuse, providing secret abortions, and even advising how the girls could continue their prostitution while recovering from their abortions. Requiring parental consent will help to vet out such instances of abuse.

Those who are victimized are often reluctant to reveal the abuse and willingly lie for fear of retribution or because of threats to harm them or their loved ones. Abusers use this control and manipulation to ensure the abuse remains hidden. Despite requirements for mandatory reporting of abuse, without parental consent, there is no oversight on this topic when it comes to a minor obtaining an abortion. Requiring notice to a parent simply provides another layer of protection. An abortion provider is not equipped to follow-up or verify the accuracy of what precipitated the minor's pregnancy. However, parents are in a position to look into suspect circumstances. This enables the parent to report statutory rape or save their daughter from sexual abuse.

For these reasons, we SUPPORT this bill and encourage you to do the same.

Thank you.