



TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO SB754  
AN ACT SAFEGUARDING THE HEALTH CARE DECISIONS OF YOUNG ADULTS  
Joint Committee on Public Health, July 11, 2017

In the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, minors must receive the consent of their parents before engaging in a number of activities, including but not limited to getting a tattoo, piercing, drinking a beer at home, or receiving non-prescription medication at school for a headache. The fundamental principle behind each of these restrictions is that a child's parents should have a say in the lives of their minor children; that they have a say in the "best interests of the child."

The proponents of this legislation argue that a pregnant woman age 16 or older should be able to choose to terminate a pregnancy without the consent of her parents – and that girls 15 and younger should not need the consent of both parents. Why is abortion treated with fewer safeguards than getting a tattoo, drinking a beer, or taking Advil at school? Should parents not have a say in helping their children work through these difficult decisions?

What this bill is really trying to accomplish is to lower the barriers to on-demand abortion, by which any woman for any reason and at any point in the pregnancy can end the life of an unborn child. If we as a Commonwealth are going to lower the age of consent to 16 why not 14? Why not 12 or 11? Few of us at age 16 know where we want to go to college or for what degree. And we usually get parental input on those decisions. It should be no different for something as life shaping and final as having an abortion.

This bill would do nothing less than position the will of the legislature between children who have made a mistake, or been victimized, and a parent who wants to help. How many young women aged 16 and older, should this bill pass, will skip having a conversation with their parents out of fear of reprisal? How many boyfriends will force their girlfriend to stand before a judge and attempt to end their pregnancy instead of seeking the counsel and wisdom of their parents?

There's a reason that despite this legislature's repeated attempts to lower the age of consent for abortion over the past several years that those bills have failed to advance: The people of this state do not want this legislation. In 2002, then-Democratic gubernatorial candidate Shannon O'Brien proposed the exact same policy this bill would enact. The people of Massachusetts said no to her plan; no to putting young women in a position where they may be pressured to make a decision that will fundamentally alter the course of their life without seeking the input of their parents.

If the legislature wants to help young women in Massachusetts who unexpectedly find themselves pregnant, they should issue an unfavorable report on S. 754 and let parents stay involved in the lives of their underage daughters.

Sincerely,

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