



State of Connecticut

SENATE

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Senator Fonfara, Representative Rowe and Distinguished Members of the Program Review and Investigations Committee:

I am Senator Michael McLachlan and I am here today to express my concerns about adolescent health care in Connecticut. I am alarmed by the current high rate of children receiving abortions in Connecticut.

Unfortunately, minor children in our state are granted access to an abortion without consulting their parent or guardian. I believe such important decisions require an adult's supervision – especially given the fact the same minor must have permission for ear-piercing, tattoos and even an aspirin in school.

I am concerned that Connecticut does not mandate parental involvement in a minor's abortion decision. Thirty-six states currently have some type of parental consent and statistics show those states generally have lower rates of abortion among minors.

I will focus my comments today from reports on this topic from the Guttmacher Institute, a widely respected research resource for reproductive health. In 2009, Guttmacher was designated an official Collaborating Center for Reproductive Health by the World Health Organization.

In 1973 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that a woman, in consultation with her physician, has a constitutionally protected right to choose abortion in the early stages of pregnancy—that is, before viability. In 1992, the Court upheld the basic right to abortion in *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*. However, it also expanded the ability of the states to enact all but the most extreme restrictions on women's access to abortion. The most common restrictions in effect are parental notification or consent requirements for minors, state-sponsored counseling and waiting periods.

Connecticut does not have any of the major types of abortion restrictions—such as waiting periods, mandated parental involvement or limitations on publicly funded abortions—often found in other states. A Guttmacher study shows abortion rates for women age 15 to 44 in the U.S. dropped four percent from 1999 to 2008. In Connecticut, for the same time period and population, the abortion rate increased fifteen percent.

Guttmacher's national study shows the following information about teenage pregnancy and abortion rates:

CT ranks #36 in the nation for teenage pregnancy rates

CT ranks #5 in the nation for teenage abortion rates

CT teens ages 15-17 have abortions at a rate 55% higher than the national average

Connecticut 2005 figures:

Age Group	Pregnancies	Abortions
Under Age 15	170	120
Ages 15 – 17	2,510	1,300
UNDER 18 TOTAL	2,680	1,420

I simply want to provide young girls with protection when facing pressure to have an abortion. Parents who are in the dark about a minor's pregnancy are robbed of the opportunity to discuss her options with her, including having her baby, and may fail to recognize her need for follow-up care and support if she has an abortion.

And just as importantly, parents may not be aware that their young daughters have become victims of sexual crimes. We know that some sexual predators have pressured their victims to have abortions to hide their crimes.

In 2007, a 15-year-old girl from Bloomfield, who had been missing for a year, was discovered in the custody of a 41-year-old man who forced her to have an abortion in a Connecticut clinic following his statutory rape of the girl. A minor girl apparently serving as a sex slave right in our backyard but no one involved with her abortion asked any questions.

I believe the time has come for Connecticut to adopt parental notification for a minor's abortion. Our neighbors in Massachusetts and Rhode Island have these requirements.

Parents or guardians must be involved in such an important decision.

The legislature should be discussing the 1,420 children under age 17 having an abortion in Connecticut in one year! How do we know if any more of these 1,420 children every year have had a similar experience as the girl from Bloomfield?

This issue crosses the boundaries of pro-life and pro-choice. No person wants to see young girls pressured to have an abortion by a sexual predator. Even if the girl can't turn to a parent then she can seek a judge to compassionately help her.

Let us move quickly to protect the health of young girls in Connecticut. Give them the protection and wisdom of their parent or guardian before having an abortion. Please support the passage of a parental notification bill in the 2012 legislative session.

Thank you.