



**Testimony for Public Hearing
Committee on Public Health
March 20, 2018**

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H.B. 5418 AN ACT CONCERNING PREGNANT PATIENTS EXERCISING LIVING WILLS

Representative Steinberg, Senator Gerratana, Senator Somers, and distinguished members of the Public Health Committee:

I write today to support H.B. 5418. NARAL Pro-Choice Connecticut is an organization focused on ensuring that every person in Connecticut can exercise their right to bodily autonomy. Our organization recognizes how crucial the right to make decisions about medical care is to maintaining this bodily autonomy. End of life decisions are deeply personal and should be made by the individual with the support of their family and their medical providers. Having those decisions respected is a cornerstone of reproductive freedom.

As it currently stands in state law, if a person has explicit healthcare wishes as outlined in a living will, those wishes are automatically nullified if the person is found to be pregnant. Not only is this one of the most restrictive pregnancy exceptions in the country, but it infringes on women's constitutional rights to refuse medical treatment and to terminate non-viable pregnancies. It disregards fetal health, the individual's expressed intent, and potential suffering of the patient. If this law were to be implemented as it currently exists, a pregnant individual could be reduced to what is in essence an incubator, despite the fact that fetal death is the overwhelming outcome in most of these cases, and there are no reported live births of fetuses when the mother began life support at 14 weeks or earlier in a pregnancy.

H.B. 5418 is a straightforward bill that fixes a glaring violation of a women's constitutional rights. In addition, the inclusion of an optional section to the voluntary, sample advance directive that allows women to specify what a medical team should do in the case of pregnancy, will improve women's ability to plan and articulate their future medical care. The process of creating an advance directive can be a difficult one, both logistically and emotionally. NARAL strongly supports any information that can make this process easier for individuals in our state.

Women in Connecticut deserve to make their own decisions about their bodies and their medical care, and to have these decisions respected by whatever medical team might be called upon to implement said care. We urge the committee to prove that they trust women in our state. Please move this bill forward.

Thank you for your time.

Respectfully,

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