



ALASKA PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION

Committed To Advancing Alaska's Public Health Since 1978

March 9, 2009

Jay Ramras, Representative
Chairman, House Judiciary Committee
State Capitol, Room Juneau , AK 99801

Dear Representative Ramras:

I am writing to express the Alaska Public Health Association (ALPHA) opposition to HB 35, NOTICE & CONSENT FOR MINOR'S ABORTION. The primary mission of the ALPHA is the enhancement of the public's health. In fulfilling that mission we oppose any efforts to limit women's access to safe abortion services.

Since 1973, the US Supreme Court's landmark Roe v. Wade decision has ensured that all women, throughout the US, have the right to abortion by allowing elective abortions before viability, or afterwards in order to preserve the health of the woman. ALPHA acknowledges that in the ideal, families provide a nurturing environment of open communication and support for its children. In the event of a teen pregnancy, many families are able to come together to assist a pregnant teen in making the difficult decisions of what is best for that situation, as well as obtain the necessary medical services. This, however, is not the case for too many of Alaskan teens. Too many families are impacted by substance and alcohol abuse, interpersonal violence and incest, making it unrealistic for the young woman to get parental consent. To require a judge's order for a woman who is pregnant, unmarried, under 17 years of age and unemancipated to have an abortion can and will result in delays in teens talking to anyone about a pregnancy and a delay in seeking medical services. Teens in troubled families are at greatest risk.

On behalf of the Alaska Public Health Association and Alaska's children, I strongly urge your opposition of SB35.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jayne E. Andreen".

Jayne E. Andreen, President
Alaska Public Health Association

Cc: Representative Nancy Dahlstrom
Representative John Coghill;
Representative Carl Gatto
Representative Bob Lynn
Representative Max Gruenberg
Representative Lindsey Holmes

Dana Strommen

From: Debra Caldera [debrac@acsalaska.net]
Sent: Sunday, March 08, 2009 10:21 PM
To: Rep. Jay Ramras
Subject: House Bill 35

Dear Representative Ramras,

Please oppose House Bill 35 requiring notice and consent for a minor's abortion. House Bill 35/Senate Bill 6 has been reintroduced in direct response to a ruling, in 2007, by the Alaska State Supreme Court which ruled Alaska's parental Consent Act, passed in 1997, unconstitutional.

Teen pregnancy happens. In most situations the young women, when faced with the pregnancy receives support from a caring partner and parents committed to the wellbeing of their child, the unborn child and the child's partner. Together they determine the best course to be taken. There are however young women who truly cannot count on the support of their families or partner to help in a crisis pregnancy. Having mustered the courage to seek medical care and having learned of her choices, she should not be required to then seek her parent's consent or that of the courts to determine the course of her pregnancy. This is a decision that impacts the course of her life and ultimately, she alone should make that decision. Requiring parental or court consent for the teen seeking an abortion places undue barriers to her resolving her situation as quickly as possible.

Please vote no on House Bill 35.

Thank you.

Debra Caldera

Dana Strommen

From: latanya.semones@ppgnw.org
Sent: Monday, March 09, 2009 1:07 AM
To: Rep. Jay Ramras
Subject: Keep Teens Safe - Vote "NO" on HB 35

Representative Jay Ramras
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol, MS 3100, Room 120
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Representative Ramras,

Alaskan parents and families are relying on you this session to vote "NO" on House Bill 35 (Parental Consent and Notification).

As an Alaskan resident and voter, I think it is important that you know the facts about HB 35.

In Alaska, the majority of teens are talking to their parents and involving them in their lives, and life-changing decisions, like whether or not to have a baby.

Unfortunately, not all parents and families have good communication, and it is those few situations, and with those few teens where HB 35 will have a detrimental impact to the health and safety of Alaska's teens.

In a home where communication is not possible, desperate Alaskan teens will take desperate measures. Instead of navigating a crowded courthouse or face a judge in rural Alaska that she may be related to, I am worried that our Alaskan daughters will delay speaking to anyone about a pregnancy, will delay seeking medical services, resort to an unsafe or back alley abortion, or even contemplate suicide.

Our daughters don't need HB 35-they need counseling and quality medical care without delay.

Teens in troubled families, and in rural Alaska, where health care access is already an issue, are truly at risk. Politicizing the abortion debate at the expense of the health and safety of Alaska's teens is not good policy.

Vote "NO" on House Bill 35. Please help keep our teens safe.
Thank you.

Sincerely,
Latanya Semones
705 24th Ave
Fairbanks, AK 99701

Dana Strommen

From: Margaret Gadsden [margaretmcdg@mac.com]
Sent: Saturday, March 07, 2009 4:31 PM
To: Rep. Jay Ramras; Rep. Nancy Dahlstrom; Rep. Max Gruenberg
Cc: Rep. John Coghill; Rep. Carl Gatto; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Lindsey Holmes
Subject: HB 35

Dear Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

I am writing to you today to encourage you to vote NO on House Bill 35 - Parental Consent and Notification. I feel strongly that if passed this would be a dangerous piece of legislation that would result in serious harm and possibly death to some of Alaska's young women. I can understand the idea that a parent would want to know if their daughter was planning to undergo a medical procedure. I can understand that a parent may feel the as a mom or dad they would have a right to know that information. I feel that for most Alaskan families parents do know when their children are sexually active, that they know when their daughters become unexpectedly pregnant, and that they know when their daughters decide not to continue a pregnancy because they have fostered open and honest communication with their daughter throughout her entire life. I sincerely believe that what this bill is trying to do is something that already happens in many Alaskan homes. I also feel that in the homes where this isn't the case it is for a good reason. Sadly, not all Alaskan young women have a home environment that is safe, loving, and supportive. I work as a high school counselor and I see that too often, because it shouldn't happen at all. But, the reality is that there are young women in our state who when they find themselves unexpectedly pregnant do not feel that it is safe to tell their parents. And there are some who feel that sharing with their parents that they do not wish to continue the pregnancy could be a life threatening conversation. Even though this is a minority of Alaskan girls, these girls still should be entitled to safe and affordable medical care, even if that care includes an abortion. These young women are entitled to the same protections under the law and the same rights to reproductive privacy. I understand that HB 35 provides a means for a young woman to still access an abortion through court consent, but that is just a road block that keeps young women from being able to get the medical care they need and desire. Our teens generally don't have the cognitive or emotional tools needed to navigate their way through court proceedings, it is not reasonable to assume that this is access, it is not. This legislation would lead young women to find other means of ending a pregnancy, and that would be much more dangerous.

What really needs to happen in Alaska is we need to have statewide support for comprehensive, medically accurate, age appropriate sex education in our public schools. If we had that then perhaps we wouldn't find ourselves in a situation where teenagers are needing abortion services. We wouldn't have the high number of teen pregnancies that we have each year. We wouldn't have the high rate of sexually transmitted infections (1 in 4 Alaskan teens) that currently exists in our state. In this area we in the United States are truly a joke among the industrialized nations of the world. I think changing this image starting here in Alaska would be the best legacy our legislature could offer.

Thank you for your time. I urge you to vote NO on House Bill 35.

Sincerely,
Margaret Gadsden
Anchorage, Alaska

Dana Strommen

From: mimi.chapin@uaf.edu
Sent: Saturday, March 07, 2009 9:19 AM
To: Rep. Jay Ramras
Subject: Keep Teens Safe - Vote "NO" on HB 35

Representative Jay Ramras
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol, MS 3100, Room 120
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Representative Ramras,

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As an Alaskan resident and voter, I think it is important that you know the facts about HB 35.

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Unfortunately, not all parents and families have good communication, and it is those few situations, and with those few teens where HB 35 will have a detrimental impact to the health and safety of Alaska's teens.

In a home where communication is not possible, desperate Alaskan teens will take desperate measures. Instead of navigating a crowded courthouse or face a judge in rural Alaska that she may be related to, I am worried that our Alaskan daughters will delay speaking to anyone about a pregnancy, will delay seeking medical services, resort to an unsafe or back alley abortion, or even contemplate suicide.

Our daughters don't need HB 35—they need counseling and quality medical care without delay.

Teens in troubled families, and in rural Alaska, where health care access is already an issue, are truly at risk. Politicizing the abortion debate at the expense of the health and safety of Alaska's teens is not good policy.

Vote "NO" on House Bill 35. Please help keep our teens safe.
Thank you.

Sincerely,
Melissa Chapin
2158 Penrose Lane
Fairbanks, AK 99709

Dana Strommen

From: Amy Devereux [amydevereux@hotmail.com]
Sent: Thursday, March 05, 2009 5:11 PM
To: Rep. Jay Ramras
Subject: HB 35

Dear Representative Ramras,

I am a 31 year old, working mother and registered voter in South Anchorage. I was born and raised in Alaska and have spent the majority of my adult life living here in this great state. I am writing to you today to express my opposition to House Bill no. 35.

I became pregnant with my now 11-year-old son at the age of 19, a few years older than the teens that will be impacted by this bill, but because of my personal experience I empathize with the young Alaskan women who will be affected if this bill passes. An unintended pregnancy at a young age can be a confusing and scary experience for any young person. In my case, I had a loving, caring, accepting family that helped me through a difficult time and helped me to make the right choice for my personal experience. But my story is not typical of all teenage pregnancies. I grew up with friends here in Alaska who had abusive relationships with their parents, some of which would have been homeless if their parents had been informed of an unintended pregnancy. Thank goodness that at that time those women were able to get the help they needed from others outside of their family unit and had access to safe, accessible, and legal reproductive health services.

The truth of the matter is, that here in Alaska, we have high rates of child abuse and we have teens that do not feel safe or secure in talking to their parents or guardians about unintended pregnancies. As a parent, of course, I would want my son to talk to me about any and every difficult situation that comes his way, but the truth of the matter is, no matter how close we are and how understanding and open minded that I try to be, he may not want to talk to me about the issues in his life. My greatest fear would then be that he could not get access to the services that he needed, due to his fear of talking about those issues with me. Though I love him more than anything in this world and I want to be apart of all aspects of his life I know that there will come a day when he does not want to share all those aspects with me.

My concern with HB 35 is this; if a young woman must seek parental consent to receive a safe and legal abortion in Alaska, and feels that she cannot talk to her family about her pregnancy, for whatever reason, that she will then seek out an abortion in an illegal and unsafe way. I do not believe that a law can mandate family communication and the reality of the situation is that not all Alaskan families have open and positive lines of communication. For these reasons I oppose House Bill 35.

Thank you for your time and I appreciate all the positive work you do for Alaskans.

Sincerely,
Amy Devereux

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Dana Strommen

From: Wayne McCready [wjmccready@mosquionet.com]
Sent: Thursday, March 05, 2009 12:19 PM
To: Rep. Jay Ramras
Subject: HB 35

Dear Rep. Ramras,

Thank you for sponsoring House Bill 35, the parental consent for a minor's abortion bill. Parents are society's best advocate for their children, are held legally responsible for their child's actions, and of course are morally responsible to God for raising them, not the State. The State has no right and no business to allow a dangerous, morally-laden medical and emotional decision to be remade by minors without parental involvement. Thank you for fighting to right an egregious violation of family rights and responsibilities. Please make this bill into law.

Yours truly,

Janine McCready