



AMERICAN ATHEISTS

January 24, 2020

Sen. Jennifer L. McClellan
Pocahontas Building, Room E512
900 East Main Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219
district09@senate.virginia.gov

Del. Charniele Herring
Pocahontas Building, Room E606
900 East Main Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219
DelCHerring@house.virginia.gov

RE: SUPPORT SB 733 (McClellan) and HB 980 (Herring) – Provision of abortion.

Dear Sen. McClellan and Del. Herring:

American Atheists along with its Virginia affiliate organizations Southeastern Virginia Atheists, Skeptics, and Humanists (SEVASH), Beltway Atheists, Inc and on behalf of 1500 constituents in Virginia is pleased to support the Reproductive Health Protection Act. The bill would remedy several unconstitutional and medically unnecessary restrictions that act as barriers to access for patients seeking abortion care in Virginia.

American Atheists is a national civil rights organization that works to achieve religious equality for all Americans by protecting what Thomas Jefferson called the “wall of separation” between government and religion created by the First Amendment. We strive to create an environment where atheism and atheists are accepted as members of our nation’s communities and where casual bigotry against our community is seen as abhorrent and unacceptable. We promote understanding of atheists through education, outreach, and community-building and work to end the stigma associated with being an atheist in America. As advocates for the health, safety, and well-being of all Americans, American Atheists objects to efforts to subordinate health care to the religious beliefs of others.

As advocates for the health, safety and wellbeing of all Americans, American Atheists strives to support legislation that is conducive to these ideals. As such, American Atheists and its Virginia affiliate organizations believe that SB 733 / HB 980 would remove political interference between patients and their health care providers by: (1) removing the requirement that patients endure a 24-hour mandatory delay, receive state-mandated biased counseling, and undergo a forced, medically unnecessary ultrasound; (2) allowing trained and qualified advanced practice clinicians (APCs), who regularly provide comparable care in the Commonwealth, to perform abortion care within their scope of practice early in pregnancy; and (3) removing the medically

unnecessary restriction targeting abortion providers (TRAP), which requires that medical facilities performing 5 or more early abortions per month be treated as a type of “hospital” which must comply with medically unnecessary building, equipment and administrative requirements.

These restrictions delay access to care and have a disproportionate impact on low-income patients and patients of color. Abortion providers should be regulated in the same manner as other doctor’s offices and outpatient medical facilities that provide medically comparable services and procedures. SB 733 / HB 980 would allow trained and qualified APCs (physician assistants, nurse practitioners and certified nurse midwives), who are licensed by the Virginia Boards of Medicine and Nursing, to provide abortion care within their scope of practice during the first trimester of pregnancy. APCs are already providing abortion care in at least 15 states and the District of Columbia. The World Health Organization and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists support APCs providing abortion care and several peer-reviewed research studies uniformly conclude that first-trimester abortion provided by APCs are as effective and safe as obtaining them from a physician trained in abortion care. APCs are important providers in rural areas of the state and to ensure that patients can access care within their communities.

Virginians should be able to get abortion care without burdensome delays and unnecessary travel. 7 out of 10 Virginians believe that abortion care should remain safe, legal and accessible. This bill is an important step to protecting access to abortion care in Virginia.

Please contact me for any questions about our position.

Sincerely,



Larry Mendoza, MS
Virginia State Director
American Atheists

Cc: Alison Gill, Esq., Vice President, Legal and Policy, American Atheists
Matthew DeGrave, Co-Director, SEVASH
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Eric Santiago, Co-Director, Beltway Atheists, Inc.
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