

PARENT'S RIGHT TO KNOW ACT, 2017
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Many years ago, the state of West Virginia passed a greatly amended bill that began as a Parental Rights Bill, but ended as an Abortionist Rights Bill. Abortion proponents cleverly altered the bill into a mechanism that allows the abortionist to perform abortions on underage girls without informing the parents of the child.

The bill was drafted in response to an incidence that occurred in Mannington, WV. A pregnant teenage girl was scheduled for an abortion, and her school guidance counselor planned to take her to Charleston for the abortion during the school day. The counselor planned to have her back in Mannington in time to catch the bus home from school. The parents had not been informed, but the girl's cousin, who was privy to the plan, informed the parents in time to prevent this scandalous abuse of parents' rights. The cousin said she did it, in part, because she knew girls, who had had abortions, and they were never the same after the abortion.

In spite of having this information at the time, pro-abortion leaders rewrote the bill to undermine its intentions. Today in West Virginia, girls may be taken for secret abortions without the parents' knowledge or consent. We believe that it is past time to address this miscarriage of justice. West Virginians for Life will be working to provide girls the protection they deserve. That means including their parents in the most important decision they will make regarding whether or not to have an abortion.

As a developmental psychologist, I can cite a great deal of research that shows that adolescents are still physically, cognitively and socially immature. When adolescents have abortions, their immaturity has negative consequences for them. The immature adolescent body is more vulnerable to the negative effects of surgical invasion, and adolescents have a high level of uterine infection following abortion. This puts adolescents at higher risk of infertility and premature delivery in future pregnancies.

Abortion in a first pregnancy also puts women at risk for developing breast cancer, because it is during the first pregnancy that a woman's breasts mature fully as organs for breastfeeding. The pregnancy begins preparing the body for child birth and breastfeeding, which includes rapid proliferation of breast tissue. Interrupting a first pregnancy, by having an abortion, leaves tissue in a state of rapid early development that cannot evolve into breastfeeding tissue. The immature tissue continues to grow without developing further, so it is at risk of forming tumors. Thus, adolescents, with their first pregnancy, are at higher risk of developing breast cancer than mature women, who have already had a pregnancy and delivery.

Research shows that abortion leads to behavioral changes, including increased use of dangerous addictive substances, such as cigarettes, marijuana, liquor and hard drugs. Immature adolescent brains react more powerfully to these substances than adult brains. The effect is that adolescents

become addicted more easily and quickly to smaller amounts of addictive substances than adults do. Thus, adolescent abortion can contribute directly to behaviors that damage health and shorten lives.

Adolescents are still functioning at an immature cognitive level as compared to mature adults. They have more difficulty drawing rational, mature conclusions from their knowledge and making logical applications to their problem pregnancy. They cannot anticipate long-term consequences or imagine the psychological impact of their decisions for future relationships with family members. These poor decision-making strategies result in bad abortion decisions. Women, who make these decisions as adolescents, report having more severe post-abortion traumatic reactions later. They are more apt to regret their abortions, to feel they made the decision without understanding what they were doing, and to suffer more from depression, terrifying dreams, anniversary reactions and damage to their self-image.

Clearly, adolescents are victims of the abortion culture. To protect these children and to encourage family communication and unity, it is essential for adolescents to have parental involvement in this important medical decision. Parents are involved in every medical aspect of their children's lives. They must give permission for their children to get an aspirin at school or to have their ears pierced. Decision-making about abortion should not be an exception to this reasonable, well-recognized practice.

The pro-life movement began to pass legislation that would provide parental guidance for the abortion decisions of dependent minors. Today, 30 states have an effective parental involvement law. Up until the 1980's, approximately 30% of all abortions were performed on adolescent girls (under 20 years of age). By 2006, that number had dropped by half to 18% of all abortions.

One of the first studies was done in the early 1990's on the Minnesota law. The study found that, following enactment of the law, there was a decrease in the adolescent abortion rate, adolescent pregnancy rate, the adolescent birth rate, and the rate of late-term abortions. The abortion rate decreased for 15-19-year-olds, while simultaneously increasing for the age group of 20-44-year-olds. Thus, the effect occurred only for the age group impacted by the law. One interpretation of these data is that the parental notification law caused adolescents to take measures to prevent pregnancy. If they don't have the option of secretly obtaining an abortion, they make more effective decisions, which result in healthier outcomes. The laws have the double benefit of reducing dangerous sexual practices and helping to encourage family communications.

Recent research on the effect of parental involvement laws across the country has consistently found the same result. These laws reduce adolescent abortion rates from 13 to 19 percent within the given states.

West Virginia does not have a pro-life law. It is ineffective in protecting families, because it allows a "second physician" to sign-off on a secret abortion for an adolescent. It has been referred to as an "abortionist-consent law." It is unfortunate that West Virginia has not been able

to protect its families and provide its citizens with the positive outcomes that have been seen in other states.