

March 2, 2017

Representative Joe Schomacker, Chair

Health and Human Services Reform Committee

200 State Office Building

St. Paul, MN 55155-1606

**Written Testimony of Karen Law, Executive Director of Pro-Choice Resources in opposition of H. F. 809**

Chairman Schomacker and members of the committee, my name is Karen Law and I am the Executive Director of Pro-Choice Resources, a reproductive justice organization working to advance and defend reproductive freedom. For 50 years Pro-Choice Resources has served Minnesota women their families, youth and transgender people who can become pregnant. Clergy and doctors founded our organization, as they believed all people should be treated with dignity and respect when making their health care decisions.

At Pro-Choice Resources, we believe that access to reproductive healthcare is a basic human right.

I have provided my written testimony in opposition to H.F. 809

In Minnesota, each year we face repeated attempts to ban public insurance coverage for abortion care. This bill HF 809 clearly demonstrates how women and families will suffer as politicians put their philosophical agenda before the real needs of their constituents.

We should not create unfair burdens and restrictions that deny health coverage for someone who is eligible and qualified for Medicaid just to make it impossible for them to have an abortion.

We know that restrictions on abortion coverage have a disproportionate impact on low-income families, women of color, immigrants, and young people.

It is unclear why we would push for this abortion coverage bans when we know that these bans will harm Minnesota’s most vulnerable women and families. This seems, unfair, unjust and discriminatory in nature.

At Pro-Choice Resources, we know that communities and families thrive when women are able to make the healthcare decisions that are best for themselves and their family.

Everyday we hear from people who are struggling to make ends meet and who are often overlooked and/or misrepresented when it comes to the unfortunate politics of abortion care. The women we serve are simply seeking resources for basic healthcare. Pregnancy happens in the context of our lives and for people like Jennifer from Fairmount, who contacted our organization because she wasn't sure her medical assistance would cover her abortion. Jennifer’s husband is a farmer who struggles to make ends meet on their small family farm. Due to personal health reasons they made the decision to terminate their pregnancy. We were able to assist Jennifer and her family so they were able to make the decision that was best for themselves and their family.

Whether Jennifer from Fairmount has private or government-funded health insurance, she should have coverage for a full-range of pregnancy related healthcare, including abortion without political interference.

We know denying medical assistance coverage for abortion will not reduce the number of abortions. In fact, research proves that laws restricting access and funding to abortion care do not improve safety and actually put women’s health at risk.

Costs rise significantly the longer a woman must wait. Studies show that women [who cannot access abortion](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/16/magazine/study-women-denied-abortions.html?_r=0) are [three times more likely](http://rhtp.org/abortion/documents/TwoSidesSameCoinReport.pdf) to fall into poverty than women who obtained abortions. Our states economic health and a woman’s reproductive health are instrinictly linked.

A woman’s health insurance should enable her to take care of her health and well-being. Providing insurance coverage for abortion care ensures a woman will be able to see a licensed, quality health provider and receive safe care. When people can plan if and when to have children, it is beneficial for them and our community as a whole.

I respectfully ask the committee to oppose House File 809 and all restrictions that place undue burdens on women’s health.

Thank you, Karen Law

**Executive Director**

**Pro-Choice Resources**

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