Madame Chair and members of the committee, January 12, 2023

I am a board certified physician specializing in OB/GYN and the subspecialty of Maternal-Fetal Medicine. I have cared for women and their babies during thousands of normal and complicated pregnancies. I currently serve as an appointed member of the US HHS Secretary’s Advisory Committee on Infant and Maternal Mortality. I understand the complexity and strong emotions surrounding abortion. I speak today in opposition to HF91.

The related House and Senate File 1 bill is obviously designed to enshrine an unlimited right to abortion in MN that goes well beyond the 1973 Roe decision. The bill prohibits gestational age limits and will make our state an extreme international outlier compared to countries like France and Germany. HF91 takes an axe to all statutes referencing abortion. It is a breathtaking grab bag of deletion and repeal.

What really grabbed my attention was the removal of a prohibition on abortion at birth centers! Over the last decade, midwife colleagues and I have provided care for more than 3700 mother/baby pairs at our birth center by supporting the desire for safe and empowering physiologic birth. Opening the door for abortions at birth centers is unsafe and schizophrenic. It is legislative malpractice.

There is much that we can agree on to improve maternal and child health in MN. Expansion of access to culturally sensitive support with midwives and doulas improves care and addresses persistent racial outcome disparities. During this session your committee should address barriers to this better model of care and hold DHS and Medicaid Managed Care Organizations accountable for how they spend more than $500M on pregnancy care each year. Unfortunately the focus of HF91 is not in that direction. It is designed to prohibit any regulation of abortion—a position that the majority of Minnesotans do not support.

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