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Testimony on H 620

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My name is Burton Wilcke. I am on the board of the Vermont Public Health Association. The Vermont Public Health Association is a member organization that subscribes to the Institute of Medicine's definition of public health which states that "Public health is what we, as a society, do collectively to assure the conditions in which people can be healthy." We strongly support assuring the conditions for all Vermonters to be healthy and to stay healthy.

Martin Luther King said "Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health is the most shocking and the most inhumane". We believe that having access to reproductive health services is, at its core, a public health issue and that assuring their availability to all women is the equitable, just and humane thing to do. We have formally adopted a policy position on women's reproductive health which supports this belief.

The Vermont Public Health Association believes that all women should have access to a system of reproductive health services that is accessible, affordable, comprehensive and of high quality. We believe that full access to these services should not be jeopardized by the political debates which have taken place regarding the availability and affordability of quality reproductive health services for women.

Specifically, the Vermont Public Health Association, believes that the doctrines of health equity and gender equity, to which we subscribe, demand that:

- all women have access to a high quality of reproductive health services, irrespective of their ability to pay.
- a comprehensive system of health insurance that assures access to the full spectrum of women's reproductive services must be in place
- a statewide system of clinical services that offers comprehensive reproductive health services should be in place
- a statewide system of educational services that provide women and their partners/families with information about their rights and available services should be in place

It is the position of the Vermont Association of Public Health that H 620 goes a long way towards moving us in the direction of a woman's right to have full access to reproductive health services which will in turn improve the health and wellbeing of both her and her family.

For all of these reasons the Vermont Public Health Association strongly supports H 620.

Thank you.