

**Dr. Lauren MacAfee DRAFT Testimony Before the Vermont House Committee
on Human Services – January 22, 2019**

Good afternoon Chairperson Pugh, Vice Chair Haas, Ranking Member McFaun, and all members of the House Committee on Human Services. I'm grateful to all of you for the opportunity to be here today to show my support for bill "H.57, an Act Relating to Preserving the Right to Abortion," which would codify abortion rights in Vermont law,

My name is Lauren MacAfee, and I'm a physician based in Burlington. I am an Obstetrician and Gynecologist and also have subspecialty training in Family Planning, which includes contraception, miscarriage management, and abortion.

I'm a member of the Vermont Medical Society, and am proud to share that they codified their support of H.57 last October. "The VMS supports protecting women's reproductive rights, including the right to contraception and to safe legal abortion, through Vermont law and/or through a Vermont Constitutional amendment."

As a doctor, I provide well-woman visits, routine obstetric care, and abortion care in Vermont. Having also practiced in Michigan, I can tell you that the hoops that women have to go through for abortion care in other states are extraordinary and cumbersome. There are waiting periods, mandatory informed consent, lack of insurance funding, and few abortion providers.

With all of these restrictions in Michigan, I still saw patients who traveled from Ohio and Indiana because they faced an even bigger set of obstacles in order to receive abortion care. Often, women presented later in the pregnancy simply because it took time for them to arrange for money, transportation, childcare and time off work to travel to another state, *specifically*

because they didn't have access to abortion. We must do better, and ensure that the women of Vermont always have access to abortion care.

When I began practicing in Vermont, I found the absence of restrictions on abortion care refreshing. I was thrilled that I had the freedom to provide care to my patients without any red tape or legislative interference. If H.57 is passed, my *patients* in Vermont will never have to bear the burdens that women in other states are forced to endure to access safe, legal healthcare.

To my knowledge, abortion is the only medical procedure legislated in the United States. Yet women who present for miscarriage care receive the same medications or have the same procedure as women seeking an abortion. The medical students and residents I teach often ask me what the difference is between the procedure we perform for an abortion or a miscarriage. My response: "paperwork". That's it. The procedure is EXACTLY the same. But depending on the state where a woman receives her care, she may be subjected to a host of unnecessary rules and requirements, which ultimately seek to undermine her access to care.

To me, abortion is a normal part of the spectrum of care that I provide my patients. Women and their families trust that I will provide them with compassionate, non-judgmental, evidence-based care, free from outside influence, regardless if it's for pregnancy care, gynecological care or abortion. H. 57 will allow providers to continue to provide exceptional care to their patients and allow us to best serve the people of Vermont.

At the end of the day, I trust women. I trust that they are making the decision that is right for them at that point in their life. I routinely tell my patients, "I don't walk in your shoes every day. I'm here to provide support, guidance and safe medical care." We need to protect and support a woman's right to access all pregnancy options. We all win if women have the right to plan their education, their vocation, and contribute to society however they see fit.

I want to thank Vermont's House leadership, especially House Human Service Committee Chair, Representative Ann Pugh, for being the lead sponsor of the bill. On behalf of my patients and the women of Vermont, I respectfully ask the Vermont House of Representatives to pass H.57 to ensure that abortion rights are protected in Vermont.

Thank you.