

**Dr. Lauren MacAfee Testimony Before the Vermont Senate Health & Welfare Committee
on Constitutional Amendment Proposal 5
March 13, 2019**

Good afternoon, I'm grateful for the opportunity to be here today to show my support for Proposal 5 which would ensure reproductive liberty for the citizens of Vermont.

My name is Dr. 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, who is proud to support this constitutional amendment making reproductive health a fundamental right for our patients and community.

As an OB/Gyn, I provide comprehensive reproductive health care including well-woman visits, routine obstetric care, contraception and abortion care in Vermont. I pride myself on developing relationships with women and having personal discussions with them about their reproductive goals. Working closely with my patient and her family, I provide evidence-based counseling and services that best meet her needs, free from outside interference.

I approach patients with a reproductive justice framework, trusting women to decide if and when they would like to parent and use my knowledge and skills to help them achieve their individual goals. These discussions are intimate and private and should be left to the patient and provider, free from government interference.

Having also practiced in Michigan, where there are a number of restrictions on reproductive health care access, I am grateful that Vermont legislators have not imposed such restrictions on women's access to reproductive health care. It was disheartening to see that the women of Michigan had to jump through additional hoops and extra barriers to access health care services simply because of the state where they lived.

When I left Michigan and began practicing in Vermont, I found the absence of restrictions on reproductive health care refreshing. I was thrilled that I had the freedom to

provide care to my patients without any red tape or legislative interference and was able to meet their needs based on my evidence-based recommendations, not because of how the state told me how to practice. If Prop 5 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.

Health care should be available to all, regardless of where they live and numerous other factors - reproductive health care is no different. Unnecessary government restrictions can impede access and worsen healthcare disparities and inequities. Prop 5 will protect and promote reproductive justice and allow our citizens the freedom they deserve to access the reproductive health care that they need.

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 reproductive health care options. We all win if women and their families have the right to plan their pregnancies, their education, their vocation, and contribute to society however they see fit.

In return, 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. Prop 5 will allow providers to continue to provide exceptional care to their patients and allow us to best serve the people of Vermont.

I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak today. On behalf of my patients, the women of Vermont, and the Vermont Medical Society, I respectfully ask you to pass Prop 5 to ensure that access to reproductive health is protected in Vermont. Thank you.