

**Testimony to Human Services Committee Public Hearing**

**Via Zoom**

**January 26, 2022**

**Submitted by Carrie Handy, St. Albans**

**Vermont Family Alliance**

My name is Carrie Handy. I am a member of the Vermont Family Alliance. Our group has come together because of what we see as an alarming trend of erosion of the rights of Vermont parents to make decisions in the best interests of their own children according to their own family values. Proposal 5 is exactly the kind of threat that concerns us.

Proposal 5 is very broadly worded; why?

It *could* have been written to ensure that future courts would be certain of its intent, but the legislators who wrote it are on record saying they would expect the “courts to decide” when disputes arise regarding its application. Why do this intentionally?

What exactly is meant by “reproductive autonomy?” And why are there no age restrictions? Will minors be free to act outside of their parents’ jurisdiction in matters related to “reproductive autonomy,” however that might be defined in the future?

And how *will* that be defined? No one knows. Hypothetically, a minor child could be **legally entitled** to obtain anything from an abortion to puberty blocking hormones, to gender-change surgery, without parental consent, involvement or even notification. Could a minor child consent to engage in sex with an adult for the purposes of achieving a pregnancy or acting as a surrogate? Where are the protections for children and the safeguards for parental involvement?

We should all be very concerned about the risks of putting such a vaguely-worded, open-ended amendment into our Constitution, but parents especially should be alarmed at the implications for them. Vermont’s families are already struggling under a burden of state domination when it comes to imparting values and making decisions in their own best interests. Strong families make strong communities, and they need to be supported, not further disempowered.

Abortion rights are already well protected under Vermont Law but Vermont’s families and children increasingly are not. Please don’t support this ill-conceived amendment.