

Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act Set to Limit Abortions in South Carolina

South Carolina's Republican-controlled House of Representatives approved a bill Wednesday that would ban most abortions after 20 weeks of pregnancy, moving the state closer to becoming the latest to limit access to the procedure.

State representatives voted 84 to 29 to approve the legislation known as the "Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act" that would ban doctors from performing abortions at the midpoint of a full-term pregnancy unless the woman's life was at risk.

The bill now moves to the Senate, where if approved and then signed by Republican Governor Nikki Haley, South Carolina would become the 13th state to enact the ban, according to the Guttmacher Institute, a nonprofit sexual health research organization.

Similar measures and legislation are also pending in West Virginia and Mississippi.

Under the bill, doctors in South Carolina would be required to determine the age of the fetus and include on abortion reports to the state health department whether an ultrasound test was used to determine the age.

Doctors performing an abortion of a fetus at 20 weeks or less would also be required to try to deliver it alive.

Physicians who do not abide by the law would face civil charges of "unprofessional conduct" and penalties up to \$10,000 and three years in prison, according to the bill.

Lawmakers backing the bill assert a fetus can feel pain by 20

weeks of gestation and that the state has a duty to protect the unborn child.

“We had over 60 studies introduced to us in committee that (showed) they do feel pain. And the state has a right to step in and protect that child,” said Representative Wendy Nanney.

Democratic Representative Gilda Cobb-Hunter criticized the measure during Wednesday’s debate.

“I find it ironic that in the middle of Women’s History Month we are debating a bill that will severely limit a woman’s right to make decisions that are rightly between her and her family and her physician,” she said.

Cobb-Hunter argued the state’s decision not to expand Medicaid health programs would make healthcare less available for potential families.

“We want to bring them to term but what about the price tag of healthcare and cost for these babies who are born against the will of their parents?” she said.

“(Republicans) plead passionately for life for those fetuses who are yet to be born. When that fetus becomes a child and is delivered, that compassion does not seem to have the same level of interest.”

Editing by Kevin Gray and Matthew Lewis

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