

LB 594 – Women’s Health Protection Act
Judiciary Committee
Proponent

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AI Riskowski

According to an “Abortion in Canada” web site the following information was sited.

Psychological Effects of Abortion

Women who have undergone induced abortion are more likely to experience mental health problems. These problems can range from mild depression to severe anxiety disorders. In a 2006 study conducted in New Zealand it was found that “in all comparisons, those becoming pregnant and seeking abortions had significantly higher rates of disorder than the not pregnant group and, with the exception of anxiety disorder, significantly higher rates of disorder than the pregnant no abortion group.”¹ Researchers concluded that “exposure to abortion is a traumatic life event which increases longer-term susceptibility to common mental disorders.”²

When compared to women who have given birth, women who have had an abortion also have significantly higher rates of admission to hospital for psychiatric reasons.³ In a 2003 study sponsored by the Ontario College of Physicians and Surgeons it was found that women who had an induced abortion had a five times higher rate of admission to hospital for psychiatric reasons in the following three months than women who had not undergone induced abortion.⁴

Women with a past history of abuse or mental problems as well as women with a lack of support, conflicting belief systems or those in their teen years are at an even higher risk for developing psychological problems following an abortion. Researchers have also found that women who are pressured or coerced into having an abortion are also “likely to experience more distress around the decision, as well as guilt, anxiety and depression.”⁵

A task force of the **American Psychological Association** made the following statement in a recent report, “According to the report, women terminating a wanted pregnancy, who perceived pressure from others to terminate their pregnancy, or who perceived a need to keep their abortion secret from their family and friends because of stigma associated with abortion, were more likely to experience negative psychological reactions following abortion.”

Physical Health Effects

Physical complications of abortion vary, depending on the age of the pregnancy and the type of abortion. In general, the risk of complications increases with gestational age past eight weeks.⁶ Some complications appear in the first hours following the abortion, while others may take days, weeks and even years to show up. Statistics on abortion complications are inconsistent and

incomplete. Most studies focus on short-term complications, while later effects on both physical and psychological health are usually neglected.⁷

The above cited studies state identifiable risks that could be revealed in a patient's pre-abortion evaluation. To discuss these risks with a mother prior to an abortion would help her make an informed decision. I encourage the Judiciary Committee to move LB 594 on to the full Legislature.

References

1 Fergusson DM, Horwood LJ, Ridder EM. "Abortion in young women and subsequent mental health." *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* 2006; 47(1): 21.

2 Fergusson. *et al.* p. 22.

3 Reardon DC, Jesse Cogle, Rue V, Shuping M, Coleman P, Ney P. "Psychiatric admissions of low-income women following abortion and childbirth." *Canadian Medical Association Journal* 2003; 168(10): 1255.

4 Ostbye T, Wenghofer E, Woodward C, Gold G, Craighead J. "Health Services Utilization After Induced Abortions in Ontario: A Comparison Between Community Clinics and Hospitals." *American Journal of Medical Quality* 2001; 16(3): 103.

5 Ring-Cassidy. *et al.* p. 131.

6 Stubblefield PG, Carr-Ellis S, Borgatta L. "Methods for induced abortion." *Obstetrics and Gynecology* 2004;104: 174.

7 Heath Care Statistics Section, Health Statistics Division. "Therapeutic Abortion Survey, June 2007: 2004-A."