STATE OF MICHIGAN
EXECUTIVE OFFICE
LANSING

RICK SNYDER
GOVERNOR

BRIAN CALLEY
LT. GOVERNOR

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To Michiganders and the Michigan Legislature:

Some recent legislation has brought the tough, sensitive issue of abortion to the forefront in Michigan. Many people on both sides of the abortion question often take an emotional approach, and make little effort to work together. Since these bills have come up, I have been attacked and threatened by people on both sides of this issue even before I have indicated what action I would take on either bill. I clearly understand it is an emotional topic.

Personally, I am pro-life and against abortion except in cases of rape, incest, and to protect the life or health of the mother. At the same time, it is important to respect women's rights and I acknowledge the Supreme Court's decisions on this issue and that it's a federally protected procedure.

I hope people will pause and allow me an opportunity to walk through my thought process behind the decision I'm making regarding these two bills in question, House Bill 5711 and Senate Bill 1293.

HB5711 was introduced earlier this year. In its initial form, it would have significantly impacted women's rights. Now, though, the bill preserves women's rights while also enacting measures to help ensure their health and safety. The bill as passed covers a number of issues; but, there are three major areas that I will address here. First, the bill adds inquiries for a physician or qualified health professional to screen patients regarding coercion to abort. Thoughtful, thorough information and training tools will be developed to ensure that women have the opportunity to review information regarding this type of coercion and the resources available to them. In my view, all coercion is wrong. Society should work to stop coercion in any form whether it's bullying a classmate or forcing someone to get, or not get, an abortion. As the parent of three kids, I have personally experienced being asked to leave the examining room when I have brought in one of my children with a sports-related injury. It is unsettling to think that someone could believe that you may have hurt your own child. However, if it helps catch even one abusive situation, isn't that worth it? Second, the bill addresses the disposition of fetal remains. It essentially puts into law what current practices already are. Third, it requires that certain health facilities performing abortions be licensed and inspected. This is strictly for facilities that have advertised outpatient abortion services and that conduct more than 120 surgical abortions per year. Several locations across our state already meet and comply with these standards. This bill also provides that waivers can be granted to any facility that existed in 2012 or before. Proper oversight will help protect women's health and wellness and seems to be a reasonable measure.

The second abortion bill, SB 1293, is part of the Blue Cross Blue Shield modernization package. This reform was one I proposed, however, without mentions or references to abortion. The bill as passed would change a significant portion of the insurance market for abortion coverage. I believe citizens should have the ability to opt in or opt out of abortion coverage in government-created health exchanges supported with public funds. “Opting in” to this coverage shouldn’t be difficult, and it is my understanding that the coverage would be available at nominal additional cost. However, the current bill goes too far in two ways. First, it treats situations that involve rape, incest and health of the mother as elective abortions. I don't believe it is appropriate to tell a woman who becomes pregnant due to a rape that she needed to select elective insurance coverage. Second, the abortion changes in this bill interfere in the current private market for insurance. Insurance companies and private buyers of insurance should be able to conduct their own affairs.

Since becoming governor, there is probably no decision that I have struggled with more or that has weighed on me as heavily. Is my analysis perfect? It is not; but it is one person’s attempt to carefully balance an explosive and emotional issue in a thoughtful way. I have learned that there will be people on both sides of this issue that will hate me for either one bill or the other. I have already seen hatred and lack of reason from people who are friends of mine. I signed HB 5711 because of its important and reasonable emphasis on protecting the health and wellness of pregnant women in Michigan. I vetoed SB 1293, despite it being a major initiative of mine, because it would have stretched the hand of government too far. I hope most of you, regardless of which side of the issue you’re on, will appreciate my effort to find the best answer and policy here.

Sincerely,



Rick Snyder
Governor