



Anti-Defamation League®

**Imagine a World Without Hate**

**VIA EMAIL & REGULAR U.S. MAIL**

April 27, 2015

Governor Steve Bullock  
Office of the Governor  
PO Box 200801  
Helena MT 59620-0801

**Re: House Bills 479 and 587**

Dear Governor Bullock,

On behalf of the Anti-Defamation League (“ADL”), we urge you to veto House Bills 479 (Montana unborn child pain and suffering prevention act) and 587 (Requiring physical presence of practitioners when performing abortion services).

As a national Jewish civil rights and human relations organization dedicated to principles of religious and individual liberty, including the right to privacy, ADL views reproductive choice as an issue of personal and religious freedom. Accordingly, we believe that government should not unnecessarily intrude on a woman’s decision about abortion. Rather, the decision should be made in accordance with a woman’s own religious or moral convictions.

Both pieces of legislation would further impede women’s access to reproductive health care. By requiring that any person licensed by the state of Montana whose scope of practice includes prescribing, administering or dispensing a drug or device that is intended to cause an abortion be in the physical presence of the woman seeking care, HB 587 will drive early, affordable abortion care out of reach of many Montana women, particularly those living in rural areas. According to statistics from the Guttmacher Institute, as of 2011, 89 percent of Montana counties had no abortion clinics. Forty-six percent of women in Montana live in a county with no abortion provider, making this bill particularly onerous. This bill contravenes safe, evidence-based medical practice by inserting the government in the role of physician. The government simply has no business substituting its judgment for that of the medical community or unnecessarily interjecting itself into this deeply personal decision.

HB 479 requires doctors to anesthetize a fetus prior to an abortion happening at 20 weeks or later even if it is not in the doctor’s best judgment. The physician’s failure to do so can result in hefty fines or jail time. The apparent rationale behind this bill is based on the unscientific theory that fetuses are sentient after about 20 weeks of pregnancy. Although HB 479 is shrouded in the language of consideration, reproductive health advocates say it could actually compromise women’s health. Adding fetal anesthesia to an abortion procedure ultimately makes the process more expensive and more medically risky. Especially in emergency situations, medical professionals should be focused on providing the best possible care – not worrying about whether their actions will put them in jail.

You have stood as an advocate for women’s reproductive access before and we ask you to do so again by vetoing HB 479 and HB 578.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Hilary G. Bernstein, ADL Director, Pacific Northwest Region

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