Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice in Michigan
PO Box 739 • East Lansing MI 48826 •www.michiganrcrc.org

December 5, 2011

My name is Joy Whitten. The Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice in Michigan opposes HBs 4798, 4799, 5182, and 5134.

As a coalition of religious organizations, we know was well as anyone that there is no religious agreement on when life begins. We celebrate that this country was founded on the principle of religious diversity – where one set of religious views does not trump another's. We know that legislating among such diversity is challenging. However, this is why it is so important to leave very personal decisions to individuals and their own moral or religious values, and not impose one particular religious perspective on all of the citizens of Michigan.

We understand that you, as our legislators and elected representatives, work diligently to protect religious beliefs of all people. When doing so, please remember that when one set of religious beliefs starts to impede on another's that is no longer religious liberty, but intolerance.

While our member organizations are religiously and theologically diverse, they are unified in the commitment to preserve reproductive choice as a basic part of religious liberty.

We believe that, as morally autonomous persons, women are entitled to make medical decisions concerning their health and reproductive lives, according to their faith and conscience as well as on factual, sound, safe and compassionate medical advice.

As such, coercion to make a decision is unacceptable to us. While protecting women from coercion is important, we are troubled that these bills are incomplete. They only address coercion in instances of abortion. The bill does not address coercion or pressure to select a different option.

Health centers that receive federal Title X money are required to present all options to a woman with an unintended pregnancy. She must receive non-directional, non-judgmental, medically accurate information about continuing a pregnancy to parent or place a child for adoption or abortion.

However, places such as crisis pregnancy centers, pressure women to not have abortions. These places are not regulated to ensure that women receive non-directional, non-judgmental, medically accurate information. To fully protect women as moral decision makers, these bills should include coercion to not have an abortion.

Furthermore, laws requiring women to receive a sonogram and view it were created to deter women from choosing abortion. Laws mandating an information packet with pictures of fetal development at different gestations were created to direct women away from abortion. The law requiring a 24-hour waiting period before receiving an abortion exists to steer women away from abortion.

Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice in Michigan
PO Box 739 • East Lansing MI 48826 •www.michiganrcrc.org

While one may think they are not coercive, they are burdensome and block access to a safe and legal medical procedure. We, the faithful, believe it is morally wrong to stand in the way of a person's health and well-being and to dictate another's moral code.

Finally, we believe that the best way to prevent the need for abortions is to prevent unintended pregnancies by improving access to education and health care. The Prevention First Package includes bills that expand access to information and health care services that would reduce unintended pregnancies and thus, reduce the number of abortions. We support these commonsense policies as they are effective and also respect the individual as a moral decision maker.

Thank you for your time and please oppose HBs 4798, 4799, 5134, and 5182.