

Dr. Ingrid Skop's Testimony

Full Committee Hearing: "A State of Crisis: Examining the Urgent Need to Protect and Expand Abortion Rights and Access"

Thursday, September 30, 2021 at 10:00 am

Thank you chair and members of the committee. I am Dr. Ingrid Skop, a board-certified OB/GYN from San Antonio. In the past 29 years, I have delivered over 5000 babies. Each of those children has made a tremendous impact on the people surrounding them, although many of them were not intentionally conceived.

The Texas Heartbeat Abortion Ban has reminded us of an inconvenient fact. A month after conception a fetus develops a heartbeat, which is universally recognized as a sign of life. A fetus is a living, genetically distinct, human being. Nearly 50 years ago, the Supreme Court pretended it did not know this was a life. Today, we cannot plead ignorance. We have all seen ultrasounds, pictures of the unborn, demonstrating he is just like us, only smaller and more dependent on our care.

The abortion debate has been obscured by euphemisms that allow us to avoid considering the action. We have created a class of humans considered unworthy of life on their own merits, valuable only if someone else desires them. This is the definition of genocide. We need to reexamine this as a scientific and human rights issue, not through the lens of political partisanship or social engineering.

The "Women's Health Protection Act" seeks to codify Roe. Do you know what Roe does? Roe allows abortion at any time in pregnancy if it can be justified as benefitting the health of the mother. "Health" is broadly defined as physical, emotional, social, familial and age factors, encompassing almost every stated reason for abortion.

Researchers affiliated with the abortion industry have ignored known limitations in voluntary U.S. data collection, publishing papers reassuring us that abortion is very safe; but better-quality international records-linkage studies demonstrate frequent complications after abortion. We did not believe the tobacco industry when it told us their product was safe, shouldn't we be skeptical of similar claims from the abortion industry?

About 86,000 abortions occur yearly after the first trimester, when the unborn human might feel pain, and about 11,000 occur after he can survive if separated from his mother. We are one of only seven countries worldwide that will allow an elective abortion after viability, even though 2/3 of Americans support restrictions after the first trimester. A complicated D&E “dismemberment” abortion may cause uterine damage or incomplete tissue removal leading to hemorrhage, infection and even death. As a resident, I will never forget a young Hispanic mother clinging to my hand in the ICU, pleading with me not to let her die, as her body succumbed to overwhelming sepsis from a late-term abortion.

Subsequent pregnancies are also at risk if instrumental uterine damage leads to abnormal placental attachment or cervical damage causes preterm delivery. Abortion harms the emotional health of some woman, leading to depression, anxiety, substance abuse and even suicide. Surely, we can acknowledge that not every woman will benefit from this decision.

I have seen many women coerced into abortions. A young Black patient tearfully recalled how her mother forced her to undergo an abortion at five months gestation. Now pregnant again, her boyfriend told her she could not return home until she ended her pregnancy. She strongly desired both of her children. Does she have a choice?

Children born to unmarried mothers have increased from 11% to 40% since Roe and this number reaches 67% in the Black community. The narrative of “Her body, her choice” has apparently led many men to believe that the decision to bear a child belongs to the woman alone, causing them to neglect their responsibilities as fathers.

This is how my pro-life commitment to women and children looks in Texas: I am the medical director of four pregnancy care centers that provide free ultrasounds, sexually transmitted infection testing and treatment, and resources to women in crisis pregnancies. Any Woman Can provides free mental health counseling. The Source’s three medical clinics provide full women’s health care, including contraception, and counseling to promote strong relationships and healthy sexual behavior. We aim to impact the upstream determinants of health that may eventually lead a woman to the crisis of an unintended pregnancy and abortion.

Abortion is not a choice to be celebrated, but a decision to be grieved. Children are not a burden to be disposed of, but a beautiful addition to the life of a

family and society. Our heroes are people who persevere in adversity. Bearing and raising children is not easy, but without this important work a society cannot endure. Let us give motherhood the support and respect it deserves and stop promoting the destruction of innocent human life.