

My name is Robert Frederick. I am an ordained pastor in the United Church of Christ. I ask you to oppose Senate Bills 612-614. These bills would greatly limit access to a safe and legal procedure that is already covered by most insurance policies.

I have both lived and ministered in Michigan since 1966. Which in turn means that I became a Michigan voter during those immediate years prior to the U.S. Supreme Court Roe vs. Wade decision that legalized abortion. And no ministry in which I have been engaged either before or since those years has meant any more to me than which I and other Lansing area pastors organized called the Problem Pregnancy Counseling Service.

We met with, talked with, prayed with women of all ages. Mostly young, some very young and accompanied by their parents. Some middle aged. Some were hoping to finish their education, some had jobs, some were unemployed, some were full-time mothers. Their religious affiliations were with just about every denomination and/or religion imaginable. Yet all of these women had one thing in common. No; it wasn't simply that all of them were pregnant. But rather it was because all of their pregnancies carried with them problems – relationship problems, religious problems, moral problems.

I share with you two things I learned from that ministry of forty some years ago. The first is let us not underestimate the capacity of women to make their own moral decisions. They don't need men to make those decisions for them. Nor do they need clergy of either sex, or need legislators of either sex to make those decisions for them. Trust the individual women themselves to do what is morally best. The second thing I learned is this: When you take away someone's power to make her own decisions, you can leave her feeling pretty desperate. We found that true in the years before Roe vs. Wade. Women resorted to self-mutilation, back alley butchering, and suicide. God forbid a return in our state or nation to that.

Having access to safe abortion procedures would have saved so many women. No matter what the problem is, it's harder to solve when you are poor. Money does open possibilities for those of us who have it.

The Michigan Senate should not put hurdles in the way of getting health care. Women with unintended pregnancies have enough problems. To keep women safe and reduce abortions, expand access to health care – not contract. Again, please oppose SBs 612-614.